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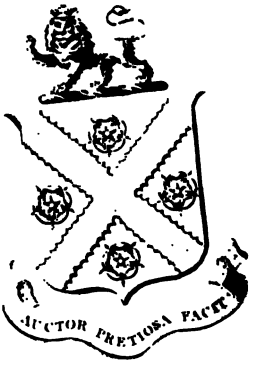

James Lenox.

MORNING EXERCISES

FOR

THE CLOSET:

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By WILLIAM JAY.

Never be without a book, in daily reading, of a direct scriptural and devotional tendency.

Hale.

The testimonies of Thy grace
I set before mine eyes;
Thence I derive my daily strength,
And *there* my comfort lies.

Watts.

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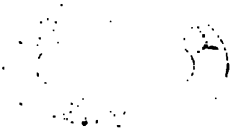

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MORNING EXERCISES

FOR THE CLOSET.

JULY 1.—"*I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.*"
Exod. xxxiii. 18.

THIS prayer was not entirely proper. It would seem that Moses desired some visible display of Deity, or some kind of representation—and so far it was refused. "He said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live. Behold, there is a place by me; and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts—but my face shall not be seen."

Here we see our weakness, even physically considered. How little can we bear! When Daniel only saw an angel, he fell into a deep sleep. John, at the sight of Him on whose bosom he had often leaned, fell at his feet as dead. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

We cannot go on well, till God has gained our full confidence. Let us never suppose that he denies us

any thing from insufficiency to give, or from a grudging disposition—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The very same principle that leads him to give us some things, induces him to withhold others—a regard to our safety and happiness—

"Good when he gives, supremely good;
"Nor less when he denies:
"E'en crosses, from his sov'reign hand,
"Are blessings in disguise."

Had He yielded all the wish of Moses, he would have been destroyed upon the spot. He therefore rejects what was evil, but grants what was good —"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." We are *morally* defective; and our infirmities appear even in our prayers—we know not what to pray for as we ought. What would be the consequence, if all our desires were accomplished? It is our privilege that God is as wise as he is kind. He knows what is really good for us; and answers us, not according to our wishes, but our wants; and according to what we ourselves *should only* pray for, if we were alive to our real welfare, and always knew wherein it consists.

Thus qualified, we cannot do better than to make this prayer our own, and desire God to shew us his glory. For he alone can do it efficiently. As the sun can only be seen by his own shining, so God can only be known by his own revealing—in his light we see light. But we have every encouragement we could desire, if we seek to him. If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord.

Let us pray, therefore, that he would shew us more of his glory. More of it in his works. More of it in his ways. More of it in his dispensations and ordinances. And, above all, more of it in the face of Jesus Christ.

Nor let us ever think we do not stand in need of this. For who expressed this desire?—but a man who had been indulged already beyond any of his fellow-creatures! Yet, after communications the most deep and extensive; after being inspired to write Scripture; after beholding God in the burning bush; after talking with him as a man talketh with his friend—so far is he from being satisfied, that his soul is drawn forth after more; and he, even *he*, cries—I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. Behold another instance. Paul, after all his intimacies with the Lord Jesus for many years, cries—"That I may know him!" But who is Moses? who is Paul?—"Which things the angels desire to look into."

Yet some are so perfectly indifferent to the subject of this prayer, that *they* say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Spiritual darkness is the forerunner and pledge of eternal. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Because they are a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

JULY 2.—"*And from thence they went to Beer; that is the well, whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it. The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the Lawgiver, with their staves. And from the*

Wilderness they went to Mattanah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth."
Numb. xxi. 16—19.

BEER was a pleasing station to the Jews; and it is a very instructive one to us. They here came into a dry place; but they neither rebelled nor murmured against God, or his servant Moses.

See, first, How easily the Lord can supply the wants of his people—"Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Not only is every good gift and every perfect gift from above; but all our temporal comforts come from the hand of God. *We* are not to look for miracles; but then we may be assured that his word can be accomplished without them: "For sooner all Nature shall change, than one of God's promises fail." And He has said, "Thy bread shall be given thee; and thy water shall be sure." And what he has promised, he is able also to perform. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. Nothing is too hard for him. He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. Jehovah-jireh! The Lord will provide. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Secondly. See how want endears our blessings. "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it." We feel unthankful for this precious fluid, because it is so common, and we have never been deprived of it. But had we gone several days in a wilderness without it, how should we have exulted and praised God at the sight of a refreshing supply. It is thus, by their removal or suspension, we are taught the worth of our comforts. How is

liberty prized and enjoyed, after bondage? and health, after sickness? and spring, after winter? and morning, after night? We become indifferent to the means of grace.—By a change of residence, or by accident, or disease, we are deprived of the privileges of the Sanctuary—then, ah! then we remember these things, and pour out our souls in us: for we had gone with the multitude; we went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and gladness, with a multitude that kept holy day.

Oh, says David, when he was faint, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well that is by the gate of Bethlehem!—And were we equally athirst, spiritually, how should we long for the well of salvation, and say,

"Thou, of life the fountain art;
"Freely let me take of thee:
"Spring Thou up within my heart;
"Rise to all eternity!"

Thirdly. His agency does not exclude or supersede our instrumentality. "The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it by the direction of the Lawgiver with their staves"—God filled it; but they digged it. This was their part. This they could do—and why should God have exempted them from it? He gives the increase; but Paul must plant and Apollos water. He furnishes the wind; but we are to spread the sails. He gives; but we gather. Prayer and diligence, dependence and activity, harmonize in the Scripture, and are only inconsistent in the crudeness of ignorant and foolish men. Paul makes Divine influence, not an excuse for the neglect of means, but a motive and encouragement to the use of them—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Fourthly. However pleasing any of our present stations are, we must, if we are the Israel of God, leave them. "And from the Wilderness they went to Mattanah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth." The part they left, is called, indeed, the Wilderness; and so it was—but it was good for them to be there. There they had witnessed proofs of the power and goodness of God; and there they had enjoyed a time of refreshing from his presence. But they had compassed the place long enough; and, decamping from this loved scene, had to journey on in the Desert. Here, also, Christians have their indulgences. But these are designed, not to induce them to tarry, but to encourage them to advance. In the midst of their enjoyments a voice cries, Arise ye, and depart hence; for this is not your rest.

These people would have been the more willing to move—because they knew they were moving towards Canaan, a better country, the end and aim of their journey; and—because they were under the direction of God, as their guide, and who would never leave them nor forsake them. So it should be with us.

JULY 3.—"*Faint —.*" Judges viii. 4.

WHAT war is there that has nothing to depress? nothing to animate? and that does not furnish a diversity of feelings in those who carry it on?

Christians resemble these followers of Gideon and subduers of the Amalekites—Faint, yet pursuing.

Yes—while engaged in this good fight of faith, they may be *faint*. We need not wonder at this, if we consider the enemies they have to vanquish—

bodily appetites; filthiness of spirit; a depraved nature; all sin and error; the present evil world; the Devil, and his angels. If we also consider the qualities of their adversaries—their number—their malignity—their power—their policy—their success: for they have cast down many mighty; yea, many strong men have been slain by them—Oh! when we think of the heroes, the statesmen, the princes, the philosophers, the divines—and all the myriads they have enslaved and destroyed, who is not ready to tremble, and exclaim,—"I shall one day perish!"

There is also the length of the service. It is not for a season only; but for life. We are not allowed to receive any proposals of peace. We cannot enter into a truce—no, not even to bury the dead—Let the dead bury their dead. We are to fight on through summer and winter—by day and night—in every situation and condition. He that endureth to the end, the same only shall be saved. In conversion we throw away the scabbard; in death only we lay down the sword. While we are here, something is still to be done; something still to be avoided—in company—in solitude—in health—in sickness. And is it nothing to watch in all things! To pray without ceasing! In every thing to give thanks! To be always abounding in the work of the Lord!

There are also occasional difficulties too common to be overlooked. It is easy to suppose a few of them. What marvel if the soldier is faint—when the road is rough and thorny—and the weather is warm and oppressive—and he hungers and thirsts for want of seasonable refreshments and supplies, which are interrupted, if not cut off—and he feels a loss of strength, occasioned by a wound from without, or an indisposition from within. Is this talking parables? There is not a Christian on earth whose religious experience will not easily explain it.

And if this, therefore, be *my* experience—let me remember that there is nothing ominous, nor even

peculiar, in it. Every subject of Divine grace is well acquainted with *this* heart's bitterness—and *must* be—or much of the Scripture could not be applied to him, either in a way of description, or comfort.

— And let me be thankful that to will is present with me, though how to perform that which is good I find not. If I faint, I do not *flee*—Faint—yet PURSUING.

JULY 4.—"— *Yet pursuing.*" Judges viii. 4.

THE life and experience of the Christian are full of contrasts. He resembles the bush of Moses, which was seen burning, but not consumed. And his language is, Cast down, but not destroyed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as dying, and behold we live. We are now viewing him as a soldier. In our last page, we saw him faint: but we shall now find him, amidst all that is grievous, feeling no disposition to give up—Faint, yet *pursuing*.

— And there is much to encourage and animate him. There is something in himself, and which is nothing less than a principle of Divine grace. Every thing else will decline when it meets with its proper temptation. Natural and merely moral resources, are as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which soon passeth away. But we are confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it. That which is Divine is durable and invincible—That which is born of God, overcometh the world.

— There is also much to encourage him in his cause. It is a good warfare. It will bear examination. Conscience entirely approves of it. Angels

applaud it. There is, therefore, nothing to make us waver, or hesitate. Every thing feeds courage. We *ought* to engage and persevere—It is the cause of truth, of righteousness, of glory—of real glory. It would be more honourable to be foiled in this cause, than to conquer in any other.

— There is also much in his Leader and Commander. Some chiefs have so attached and inspired their troops, that they would plunge into any enterprise, or follow them into any danger. It was said, proverbially, at Rome, that it was unbecoming a Roman soldier to fear while Cæsar was alive. It is much more unworthy a Christian soldier to fear while Christ is alive: for, because, says he, I live, ye shall live also. When Antigonus heard some of his troops rather despondingly say, How many are coming against us? he asked—But how many do you reckon me for? And whenever *we* think of our foes, and the Captain of our salvation, we may truly say, More are they that be with us, than they that be with them. Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. Who goes before us? Who teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight? Who provides for us? Who renews our strength? What limits have His wisdom and power? Did he ever lose an action yet? or a single soldier?

"A Friend and Helper so Divine
"Doth my weak courage raise;
"He makes the glorious vict'ry mine,
"And his shall be the praise."

— And, oh! let me think of the certainty of the issue!—Fear unnerves: but it would make a hero of a coward to assure him in the conflict that he should overcome. This can rarely or never be done in other contentions: for nothing is so doubtful as the result of a battle—Prudence, therefore, says, Let not him that putteth on the harness boast himself like him that putteth it off—But the Chris-

tian enters the field under peculiar advantage. However trying or lengthened the struggle may be, he fights not uncertainly—

"The weakest saint
"Shall win the day,
"Though death and hell
"Obstruct the way."

Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors!

— For what will be the result of success? What do other victors gain? How precarious, how unsatisfying, how poor and mean, the rewards of the world's warriors, compared with the acquisitions of the good soldier of Jesus Christ! He that overcometh shall inherit all things!

"Then let my soul march boldly on,
"Press forward to the heavenly gate;
"There peace and joy eternal reign,
"And glittering robes for conqu'rors wait."

JULY 5.—"*Submit yourselves to God.*"
James iv. 7.

THIS is the great thing—This is the excellency, the essence, the proof, of religion. God is our Saviour. Our Lawgiver. Our Disposer. Under each of these characters his people are made willing to submit to him in the day of his power. And nothing but the efficiency of Divine grace can influence a man cordially to resign himself to God in either of these relations.

We must submit ourselves to God, as the Saviour. Here our concern with him begins. And here it must begin. We are condemned; and the first thing is to obtain deliverance. We are diseased and dying, and the first thing we want is the physician and

the remedy. When, therefore, the Jews asked our Lord, What must we do that we may work the works of God? "This," said he, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." When the gaoler asked Paul and Silas what he should do to be saved, they said unto him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." God is a sovereign, at whose mercy we absolutely lie. We have no claims upon him; and it is wonderful that he is disposed to undertake our case at all. But he requires us to submit: and will not allow us to prescribe. He will have the entire management of our case, or he will have nothing to do with it. And it might be supposed that there would be no great difficulty here. But men are not sensible of their condition and danger; and there is much in the nature and manner of this salvation that is not palatable to the pride of the human heart. No court is paid to our reason; but we are required to trust in a plan concerning which we have never been consulted; and even to become fools, that we may be wise. However decent and moral our character has been, we must be content to enter into life in the very same way with the chief of sinners. We must renounce our own righteousness, and plead for acceptance as guilty. We must depend on another for all our strength. We must acknowledge that all we have is from the exceeding riches of his grace; and be crying, to the last, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

But to this every awakened and humbled sinner is brought. And his submission is not the effect of necessity only. It is accompanied with acquiescence and approbation. He sees a consistency and an excellency in it, that delight him, while they relieve. And though he knows there is no other way—yet if there were a thousand, he would turn from them all, and say, God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must submit ourselves to Him, as the Law-giver; and be willing to live, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. He is only the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. We cannot love Him, till we hope in his mercy: nor run in the way of his commandments till we are freed from the load of guilt and terror—a burden too heavy for us to bear. But faith is followed by love; and love, by obedience. We are delivered from the hand of our enemies, says Zecharias, not to be lawless, but to serve Him, who has made us free, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before Him, all the days of our lives. Our obligations are infinitely increased by redeeming grace and dying love. And every believer feels them, and acknowledges that he is not his own, for he is bought with a price, and bound to glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are God's. The love of sin, as well as the love of self, is subdued in him: and he gratefully asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He finds his yoke easy. He accounts his service to be the truest freedom. He cannot, indeed, do the things which he would, and this is his grief: but he delights in the law of God after the inward man. He would not bring down the Divine commands to his deficiencies; but longs to rise to the level of their perfection. And though he is full of complaints, it is of the servant, and not of the Master—He always speaks well of *his* Name; and recommends him to others.

We must also submit to him, as our Disposer, and be willing that he should choose our inheritance for us. Man naturally loves independence: he wishes to be at his own control; and to have the management of events, both as they affect others, and himself. Many, also, who talk much of the providence of God, are constantly striving with it. Hence they envy the successes of their fellow-crea-

res; and are discontented and repining when things o not fall out according to their mind; and—espe-ally under their trials, think God deals improperly ith them: and so charge him foolishly, or unkindly.

But this temper is, at least, dethroned in the hristian: and he is disposed to say, "Here I am; t Him do what seemeth him good." I am ignor-nt, and liable to be imposed upon; but He is l-wise: and by not sparing his own Son for e, he has justified the implicit confidence of my eart. Let him, therefore, determine the bounds f my habitation, and arrange all the events of my ndition. If things are not such as I had wished nd reckoned upon, I have no reason to complain. le has a right to do what he will with his own; nd he always uses it in a way the most conducive) my welfare. How often have I desired him to ndertake and act for me! And when he complies -is it for me to murmur, and dispute; or say unto im, What doest thou?

"'Lord, I would, I do submit;
'Gladly yield my all to Thee:
'What thy wisdom sees most fit,
'Must be surely best for me.—

—'Only when the way is rough,
'And the coward flesh would start,
'Let thy presence and thy love
'Cheer and animate my heart.'"

JULY 6.—"*What went ye out into the wilderness) see?*" Matt. xi. 7.

THESE are the words of Jesus to the multitude, oncerning John, to whose preaching they had re-aired. "There were many of you—and persons of ll ranks and conditions—and some from a great

distance. What did you think of the preacher? What induced you to attend his ministry? Surely you had some reason for it—some design in it—What was it?"

May we not learn from hence that we should always have an end in view in repairing to the ordinances of religion? and be able to answer the question, *Why* we attend the preaching of the Word?

This becomes us, even as men. Men ought not to act at random; or, like the inferior creatures who are led by blind impulse or instinct, without reflection or motive. They, as the Scripture says, have no understanding, and must be governed and guided by those above them. But God teaches us more than the beasts of the field, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of the air: for there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. And wherein is this pre-eminence to appear, but in our acting wisely, and with design?

— We rise higher, and say, that without this we cannot please God. There can be nothing religious without design. Intention is essential to moral conduct. And though a good motive cannot sanctify a bad action, a bad motive will always vitiate a good action. The Pharisees fasted, and prayed, and gave alms; but it was to be seen of men: and thus all was corrupted in its principle.

— Without an aim in our attendance, we have nothing to pray for before we go; nothing to make the subject bear upon, while we are hearing; nothing by which to examine ourselves when we return. How can we decide, whether our meeting together is for the better, or the worse? Whether we have failed in the opportunity, or succeeded? Success is the accomplishment of an end; and must be judged of by it.

— A man that acts without an end, never acts in earnest. It is the end that stimulates zeal; that

veetens labour; that repays every expense. What ould induce a patient to the taking of medicine, r the losing of a limb, but the thought of restoring r preserving health and life?

— To finish the argument—the concern itself ere should be taken into the account. In common and trivial matters, we may act without motive; but in momentous ones, every kind of deliberation is wisdom. And how important is our ttendance on the Word of Life! It regards God. And the soul. And eternity. Its consequences will emain for ever. It must furnish the most awful art of our future account. *We* forget these exercises; but they are all recorded in the book of God's remembrance. *We* have soon done with the sermon; but the sermon has not done with us, till it has judged us at the last day. What an insult is offered to God, to come before him, and, by an appearance of devotion, to call forth his attention, when, in reality, we have nothing to do with him! What a trifling is it with Divine things! And what can be so dangerous as this! It impairs the conscience. It deadens moral sensibility. It renders the means of grace unimpressive, by familiarity. It provokes God to withhold or withdraw the influence essential to their success.

But, admitting that we always ought to have an end in view; what OUGHT THAT END TO BE?—Not curiosity and amusement. This was the case with Ezekiel's hearers. They went to his preaching as persons go to a concert.

— Not criticism and cavilling. Many are wiser than their teachers. They come to judge—not to learn; and make a man an offender for a word. Many came to our Saviour, to "catch him in his talk."

— Not any outward advantage. A man, by his attending the Gospel, may secure himself reputation, business, or friendship. But this is trading in Divine

things. And what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

— Not the quieting of conscience. Some are at ease in Zion, because they hear the Word of Truth, though they do it not. But the Apostle tells us, they deceive their own selves: and our Lord calls them fools, because they build upon the sand.

— But the end should be—

To obtain the conversion of the soul to God. This is the very design of the ministry itself. And how many have we known, since we attended the Word, who have been turned from the error of their ways, into the path of peace! Has faith come to us by hearing? Has this efficacy ever been our aim—our wish—our prayer?

It should also be, to gain all needful instruction. This was the case with many who came to hear John. The people, the publicans, and the soldiers, severally said to him—"And what shall we do?" They did not enquire after the duty of others, but after their own. David went to enquire in God's Temple; and said, I will hear what God the Lord will speak. The best disposition we can go in, is when we have no partialities, and can sincerely ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—Not shunning to hear all the counsel of God; or counting the preacher our enemy, because he tells us the truth.

It should be to have Divine things re-applied and re-impressed. If we do not want new information, it is desirable to be reminded of forgotten truth; and to have our knowledge reduced to experience and practice. The principle of Divine grace cannot be lost. But what changes do believers feel in their frames! How often do their souls cleave unto the dust! And here they obtain quickening, according to his Word. And by waiting upon Him, their strength is renewed.

It should be, also, to aid in upholding the public means of grace for the advantage of others. How adapted to usefulness is the institution of preaching. We may judge what a neighbourhood would be without the ministry of the Word, when we see what it is even with it. Here are always to be heard calls to repentance; and proclamations of pardon—Here are always furnished solace to the afflicted, and excitement to the careless.

It is lamentable that so little of this spirit is to be found in the midst of so much hearing as there is in our day. We read of a concourse of people in the Acts, occasioned by the clamour of Demetrius, of whom it is said, "Some cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." With the exception of crying out, here is a fair representation of many a religious audience. A few are informed and principled, but the mass have no aim, or an improper one.

— Yet, in another view, it is pleasing to see a place filled with hearers. They are in the way; and God may meet with them. His grace is sovereign and free. Some, who came with no serious design, have been convinced of all, and judged of all; and confessed that God was in the midst of them of a truth. Yet His sovereignty is not our rule, but our resource. What he may do, is one thing; what he will do, is another. He has said, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." And though he is sometimes found of them that seek him not, he is always found of them that seek him.

JULY 7.—"*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*"

Rom. vii. 24.

It is commonly supposed that here is a reference to a cruel usage sometimes practised by the tyrants of antiquity; and which is mentioned by Virgil and Cicero, and Valerius Maximus. It consisted in fastening a dead carcass to a living man. Now suppose a dead body bound to your body—its hands to your hands—its face to your face—its lips to your lips. Here is not only a burden, but an offence. You cannot separate yourself from your hated companion—it lies down, and rises up, and walks with you. You cannot breathe without inhaling a kind of pestilence—and "Oh!" you would say, "O how slowly the parts corrupt and fall off—O how can I longer endure it! When shall I be free! O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is very strong. Yet it comes not up to Paul's case. He is speaking of a wretchedness, not without him, but within.

Whatever we may think of this allusion, here is a representation of the sin that dwelleth in us—it is the body of this death, or, as it is in the margin, this body of death. It is called—*a body*, to intimate the entireness and universality of the evil: thus we call a code of laws a body of laws; and a system of divinity, a body of divinity. And it is a body of—*death*, to mark its malignant effect. Gunpowder is a body of destruction; arsenic is a body of poison—sin is a body of death. It brought death into the world; it has slain all the inhabitants of the earth, and will soon slay us; it has brought upon us spiritual as well as corporeal death: and it produces a deadness even in the souls of believers, and hinders the operation of those vital principles which they have received from above. By this baneful influence the tendencies of the Divine life in them, which are so glorious, are chilled and checked: and therefore they are frequently wandering, in meditation; and stupid, in reading and hearing; and insensible, in prayer; and dull, even in praise; so that

"Hosannas languish on their lips,
"And their devotion dies:"

Till, roused by reflection, they cry,

"Dear Lord, and shall we ever live
"At this poor dying rate?
"Our love so faint, so cold to Thee,
"And thine to us so great!"—

—My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word.

For there are remains of this evil even in the subjects of divine grace. None of them are free. In many things, says James, we offend all. In all our doings, says the Church, our sins do appear. My tears, says Beveridge, require to be washed in the blood of Christ; and my repentance needs to be repented of. Those who could die for the Saviour have used the most humbling language with regard to themselves. Sometimes, says Bradford, O my God, there seems to be no difference between me and the wicked; my understanding seems as dark as theirs, and my will as perverse as theirs, and my heart as hard as theirs. Yea, says Paul, at the end of so many years of advancement, I have not attained, am not already perfect. After this, "Who can say, *I* have made my heart clean, *I* am pure from my sin?"

But observe the distress this remaining corruption occasions them. It is their chief burden and grief—O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Paul never said any thing like this of any of his sufferings: yet he was a great sufferer—he suffered the loss of all things; he was once stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, he was twice beaten with rods, five times he received forty stripes save one; he was in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft—Yet, so far from groaning

and complaining, he tells us he took pleasure in all this, because it was for Christ's sake. And it is a sad evidence against us, if we are more affected with our calamities than with our corruptions. We are not required to be Stoics: we may feel our sufferings; but there is something we shall feel more if we are in a right state of mind, viz. an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The people of the world judge of Christians by their own views and feelings; and because *they* love sin, and would deem the liberty to indulge in it a privilege, they think Christians are disposed to take every advantage for the same purpose. But how shall they who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Sin is their abhorrence; and at the foot of the Cross they have sworn to have indignation against it for ever. They have a new nature; and as *far* as they are sanctified, there is as perfect a contrariety between them and sin, as between darkness and light. Hence the contest within. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these being contrary the one to the other, they cannot do the things that they would. And will not this be painful? If a mechanic longed to excel in his workmanship, and an enemy stood by and marred every thing before he put it out of his hand, would not this be vexatious? Would not a man, in a journey of importance, and anxious above all things to speed his way, feel a hindrance, that would impede him for an hour, more than an idler would the loss of a day? He that delights in neatness, will suffer more from a single stain, than another would from wearing a filthy garment.—Because their sentiments are evangelical, their enemies seem to think their feelings must be Antinomian: but though this may not be made plain to others, their doctrinal views befriend holiness; and with their mind

they serve the law of God—yea, they delight in the law of God after the inward man. The goodness of God leadeth them to repentance. His love is shed abroad in their hearts, and they love him in return. They grieve to think they serve him so defectively, and have still in them so much of that which he infinitely hates. How painful to think that while they repose upon his bosom, they should often pierce it too!

In a word, while many would represent the Christian, if not an enemy to holiness and good works, yet too indifferent to their claims, he is abasing himself before God for the hidden evils of his heart; and is more affected with his sins of infirmity than his revilers are with sins of presumption.—Thus you may drive a sword through the body of a dead man, and no muscle moves. While the puncture of a thorn will pain a living one all over.

JULY 8.—"*But ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified.*" 1 Cor. vi. 11.

WE consider the word, "washed," as a general term, comprehending a two-fold cleansing—a cleansing from the guilt, and a cleansing from the pollution of sin. It would be easy to shew that in the Scripture it is used in both these senses. The two added articles, therefore, are explanatory of its meaning here—Ye are washed, that is, ye are sanctified and justified.

What we wish to observe, is—that both these are found in the same subjects. Justification and sanctification should be always discriminated; but they must never be disunited. Where they are not distinguished, a religious system cannot be clear;

and where they are divided, it can never be safe. Where they are not distinguished, Law and Gospel, free-will and free-grace, the merit of man and the righteousness of Christ, run into a mass of confusion and disorder. And where they are divided, Pharisaic pride, or Antinomian presumption, will be sure to follow.

Be it remembered, then—That the one regards something done for us; the other, something done in us—The one is a relative, the other a personal change—The one a change in our state, the other in our nature—The one is perfect at once, the other is gradual—The one is derived from the obedience of the Saviour, the other from his Spirit—The one gives us a title to heaven, the other a meetness for it.

But let us not forget their union. It is supposed that this was typified in the dying of the Lord Jesus, when from his pierced side there came forth blood and water—the one to atone, the other to purify. But not to lay too much stress on an historical incident, and which can be physically accounted for, the truth to which we allude is most expressly asserted in the Word of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—We need one, as well as the other. And if we were not sanctified, as well as justified, we could neither serve God properly, or enjoy him. Suppose an unrenewed man pardoned: he would be no more able to see the kingdom of God than before; but would feel the company, the pleasures, and employments, of the state, uncongenial and irksome, Or suppose you had a son; and you forbad him to enter a place of contagion, on pain of losing all you could leave him. He goes, and is seized with the infection—He thus is not only guilty, by transgressing your com-

and; but he is also diseased. And do you not erceive, that your *forgiving* him does not *heal* im? He wants not only the father's pardon, but ie physician's aid; and in vain is he freed from ie forfeiture of his estate, if he be left under the ower of his disorder.

Let us therefore judge of the one, by the other; nd make our election, by making our calling sure. 'o be justified freely from all things; to have passed om death unto life; and never to come into conemnation again, is a privilege of infinite value—nd there is a possibility of knowing that it belongs) us. But how is it to be known? Not by an udible voice from heaven, as the woman heard—Thy sins are forgiven thee." Not by a sudden npulse, or working the mind into a persuasion hich we are unable to justify. For the very thing) be determined is, whether this confidence be good hope through grace, or a mere presumption. f the confidence itself were sufficient, the Anomian would be surer than the Christian; but e has a lie in his right hand. The Sacred Writers o not consider this certainty of mind as self-proved; or regard all apprehensions of its wavering, as unelief. They tell us to "fear, lest a promise being eft us of entering into his rest, any of us should eem to come short of it." They call upon us to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith; nd to prove our own selves." "We know," says ohn, "that we have passed from death unto life—ecause we love the brethren." "Hereby we know hat he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath iven us." This is the way, walk ye in it—What) the Spirit which he hath given you? Does it onvince of sin? Does it cause you to hunger and irst after righteousness? Does it glorify Christ?

It is true that we are justified by faith; but faith justified by works. Has this promise been fulled in us? "Then will I sprinkle clean water

upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." As far as we are strangers to this practice, and to these dispositions, whatever our knowledge or our assurance may be, we ought to tremble. For though the grace of God finds us sinners, it does not leave us such. While it "bringeth salvation," it teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

JULY 9.—"*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*" Luke xi. 1.

THOUGH "one" of the disciples said this, we have no reason to think the rest differed from him. He was the mouth for them all. When our Lord said to the twelve, Will *ye* also go away? *Peter* answered—but it was in the name of his brethren; and expressed the conviction of each of them—"Lord, to whom shall *we* go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

It is very probable *he* was the speaker here: for his heart was always in his mouth. But whoever the speaker was, every thing here was praiseworthy.

I admire his decorum. Some are satisfied with the moralities of conduct; but there are the proprieties too; and these are not to be overlooked. "Let every thing be done," says the Scripture, "decently, and in order." This should be peculiarly the case in our holy assemblies. Let us guard against every thing that is unseemly, and disturbing. Let us avoid coughing as much as we can. Let us not look and stare all over the House of God. Let us not talk or whisper. Let us beware of coming in during the service. How painful and injurious is it to the preacher and worshipper to be interrupted and diverted in those sacred moments in which we ought to attend on the Lord without distraction. Observe these disciples. They surrounded our Saviour while he was engaged—but with breathless silence; and did not break in upon his devotion—but waited till he had "ceased praying."

I admire his emulation. Having heard his Master, he began to say, Well, this *is* prayer. What dignity! What wisdom! What reverence! What submission! What fervour! According to this, we have never prayed yet—Lord, teach us to pray. Indeed, the more we attend on him in any thing, the less shall we think of ourselves. The beams of this Sun will soon darken our tapers.

I admire his wish to resemble what he so much admired. We should always endeavour to improve by the superior endowments and excellencies of others. These should not excite envy, or yield discouragement; but excite to imitation. What others are, they are by grace; and when we see how any of our fellow-Christians bear prosperity, or endure affliction, or fill up their stations; we should be anxious to follow them, even as they follow Christ.

I admire his spiritual wisdom. Some wish to resemble others in worldly possessions; or bodily qualities; or mental endowments and acquisitions. But it is better to resemble them in grace, than in any of these. Many would rule, or compose, or speak, like others; but the thing is, to *pray like them*. It is by prayer we hold communion with God. It is by this we unlock all his treasures. He that knows how to pray, has the secret of safety in prosperity, and of support in trouble. He has the art of overruling every enemy, and of turning every loss into a gain. He has the power of soothing every care; of subduing every passion; of adding a relish to every enjoyment—The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver; and the gain thereof, than much fine gold. Many things are good for me; but none so good as to draw nigh to God.

I admire his humility. He is convinced that they are not sufficient of themselves for the duty, but need Divine aid. We want instruction in every thing. The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps: but we peculiarly need guidance here. The Spirit helpeth *our* infirmities, says the Apostle; for *we* know not what to pray for as we ought. The best of men have erred in their prayer. Take my life from me, says Elijah, in the very midst of his usefulness. I beseech Thee, says Moses, shew me thy glory. You ask for death, says God; for no man can see me, and live. "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized

with?" What would children be—how miserable—how useless—what burdens to themselves—and what plagues to others, if they had whatsoever they desired!—As to temporal blessings, it is hard to distinguish between our real and our imaginary wants; and between what is pleasing, and what is profitable. And even as to spiritual things—we never see their beauty and glory, so as to desire them supremely, till the Lord teaches us to profit. Nor do we know of ourselves how to come before the Lord, and deal concerning them. Under a sense of guilt, and a concern to obtain acceptance, what strange expedients do we often adopt; and what a self-righteous traffic do we carry on, before we come to the blood of sprinkling, and make mention of his righteousness only.—We may also err, as to our end and aim. We often ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts.

— "An easy thing to pray"!!! Who that has made the trial, and is concerned for the result of it, but exclaims, with Elihu, "Teach us what we shall say unto Him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness"? Lord, teach us to pray.

JULY 10.—"*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*" 2 Cor. ix. 15.

WE have always been accustomed to think of Christ when these words are pronounced: and we are not disposed to give up this application without necessity. And we see no such necessity—if we appeal to authority: for, not to mention many of the ancients, this application is supported by many of the moderns also; by a Henry, a Scott, a Doddridge. And we see no such

necessity—if we refer to to the writer of the words. Paul's mind was full of Christ; and the love of Christ constrained him: and nothing is more common in his Epistles than sudden and unlooked-for allusions to him. To which we may add, the nature of the case itself: for if the words would apply to the charity of the Corinthians, how much stronger will they apply to the Saviour of sinners! And though we would do justice to every part of the Scripture, we would yet rather be followers of Cocceius than Crellius, of whom, as expositors of the Bible, it was said, the one found Christ every where, the other no-where.

God then (this is the meaning) so loved the world, that he *gave* his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life—and he is not only a gift, but an UNSPEAKABLE gift. Much has indeed been said of this gift—in Christian conversation; in the sermons of ministers; in the preaching of Prophets and Apostles; in the Scriptures of Truth, of which it is the principal, and, in a sense, the only subject. But it is not in the power of words to do it justice. And we see how even inspired men labour for terms and images, when they would hold forth a little of the Saviour's glory.

He is a gift unspeakable—if we consider the greatness of his person. We consider him a man of sorrows: but he was not always so. He was born in the fulness of time: but his goings forth were from of old from everlasting. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

— Unspeakable—if we consider the immensity of the plenitude which he possesses, as Mediator, for our use. Some things include many more. What an unspeakable blessing is a fountain, being the

source of all the refreshing streams that flow from it, and fertilize and beautify the ground! What an unspeakable blessing is the sun, that makes our day, our spring, our summer!—What would the earth be without the sun! What an unspeakable blessing is life, with all its intelligence, pursuits, productions, and enjoyments! *He* is the fountain of living waters. *He* is the Sun of Righteousness. *He* is the life of the soul and eternity. He not only insures every thing else, but contains it—In him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

— And can we think of this, and not exclaim—*Thanks* be unto God for his unspeakable gift? Nothing is so detestable as ingratitude. The very Heathens condemned it. One of their philosophers said, Call a man ungrateful, and you call him every thing that is vile. The Lacedæmonians made it punishable. South compares such a wretch to the sea, that turns the sweet influences of the clouds into brine; and to the grave, which is always receiving, and never restoring. How soon we complain of a want of thankfulness in our fellow-creatures towards ourselves! How soon do we abandon them, when our favours seem lost upon them!

And yet what *are* these favours, when, too, we are under an obligation to shew them, from a community of nature, and the command of God! How few! How small! How far from being entirely pure in their motive! With how little self-denial and sacrifice attended! Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And can this love deserve only a careless reflection of the mind? a cold acknowledgment of the lip? Ought it not to claim and consecrate the heart? Ought we not to ask, every moment, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits

towards me? Ought we not, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice?

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
"That were a present far too small:
"Love so amazing, so Divine,
"Demands my soul, my life, my all."

JULY 11.—"*And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.*"
1 Kings xix. 8.

HAVING, on Mount Carmel, witnessed the triumph of truth over idolatry; and destroyed Baal's prophets; and predicted the return of rain; and urged the king to hasten home, lest he should be impeded by the approaching torrents; "Elijah girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." Had Ahab properly regarded Elijah, he would have taken him up into his chariot, as the Eunuch did Philip; and have honoured him before his attendants; and conversed with him respecting the awful state of the country—But he did not cordially like him; and was happy to get rid of him as soon as possible; as Felix said unto Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

— But we admire the conduct of Elijah. He was not elated, by the recent unparalleled honours conferred upon him above the duty of a subject; and therefore, notwithstanding the character of Ahab, he pays respect to him as his sovereign; and renders honour to whom honour was officially due.

— It is probable that Elijah came to Jezreel to carry on the reformation he had begun; and

hoping that the late miracle would give him a powerful influence. But soon after he arrives in the suburbs, he learns the determination, not of the queen consort, but of the queen *regent* (for Ahab, though king, was completely governed by a termagant wife), to put him to death. "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Upon this, he should have stood his ground, and have resolved to go on with his work, leaving events with God, and relying upon that Providence and grace which had so signally appeared for him. He should have replied, as Chrysostom did, when Eudoxia, the empress, threatened him —"Go, tell her that I fear nothing but sin:" or as Bazil did, when Valerius, the Arian emperor, sent him word that he would put him to death—"I would that he would; I shall only get to heaven the sooner:" or as Luther did, when they would have dissuaded him from going to Worms—"I would go, if there were as many devils there, as there are tiles upon the houses:" or as the Prince of Condé did to the French king, when he proposed to him, going to mass, or perpetual banishment, or death—"As to the first of these, by the grace of God, I never will; and as to the other two, I leave the choice of either to your majesty."

But where is the faith that never staggers through unbelief? The hand that never hangs down? The knee that never trembles? We are amazed at the magnanimity of Elijah before, in reproving Ahab to his face, opposing single-handed all the followers of Baal, and slaying Jezebel's four hundred and fifty chaplains! But what is man! He cannot stand longer than God holds him, or walk further than God leads him—This same hero now turns pale,

and flees for his life! "And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there." And why did he leave him? Was it from tenderness, wishing to save him from the perils to which he himself was exposed? Or was it the more perfectly to conceal his movements, as one could be more easily hid than more? Or did he wish for unrestrained, unwitnessed intercourse with God? There are seasons, and places, in which we wish no eye to see, no ear to hear—but God to be all in all. Abraham left his young men below, when he ascended to worship God. And Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, in the Garden—Tarry ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

However this was, "he went a day's journey into the Wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree:" and, fatigued with journeying and hunger; and harassed with forebodings; and despairing of further success in his exertions; he asked to resign, not only his office, but his life—"He requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"—*i.e.*, I am not fitter to bear their trials, or discharge their duties, than they were. Why then should I remain, when they are removed? I have done and suffered my share. This was the language of nature, not of grace. Children grow fretful as they grow sleepy. Paul longed to depart, to be with Christ, which was far better; yet he was willing to abide in the flesh, because it was needful for others. While we are ready to go, we must also be willing to stay, if God has any thing for us to do, or to suffer. To be impatient for retreat, especially as soon as we meet with disappointment, is unmanly and sinful.

Though Elijah was forward to die, it was a peevish haste, and evinced that he was in a very improper frame for the event.—But God remembered that he

was dust, compassionated his weakness, and appeared for him, even in a strait of his own producing—not dealing with him after his desert. "And as he lay and slept under a juniper-treee, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise, and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head; and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." Before, He had fed him by ravens; now, He supplies him by one of those heavenly messengers who are all ministering spirits unto the heirs of salvation. The office seemed beneath one of these glorious beings. But he was as much pleased to bring a meal to this weary traveller, as he would have been, had he received orders to manage the affairs of an empire. Angels have no partialities—They consider not the *nature* of the command, but only the *Author*—May His will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

— But what *was* the meal? A cake of bread and a cruse of water! Nature is content with little; and grace, with less. How many disorders arise from excess! A voracious appetite is a judgment. A delicate one is an infirmity. A dainty one is a disgrace. Ministers, above all men, should not be given to appetite, or be fond of dainty meals. And those who entertain them should not insult them by the nature and the degree of their preparations. Did our Saviour require much serving? Did not he reprove Martha, for being cumbered about many things? When an angel was the guest, Abraham brought him forth a cake, baked on the hearth, with butter and milk. And when an angel, who had the command of every store, catered for the greatest and best man of the age—it was a cake of bread and a cruse of water.

— "But the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise, and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."

God's caring for his people, is not only relieving, but prospective. He foresees what they will need, and prepares them for difficulties and duties which they had not reckoned upon. He strengthens the shoulder when the burden is going to be increased. And when he gives them an additional supply of faith, hope, peace, and joy; little, perhaps, do they imagine what trials they are to endure, or what steps they are to take, in the strength of it!

— But how was Elijah fitted for his journey! Surely the sustenance derived from this meal was miraculous. But it shews us what His power can do; and teaches us that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God." And why did he choose to repair hither? Would no other place have afforded him an equally safe retreat? Was he actuated by curiosity? or piety? Here was much to strike his mind, and to aid his faith and devotion. Here, would he say, Israel encamped! Here fell the manna! Here moved, and here stood, the fiery cloudy pillar! On the top of this hill God spake all the words of his Law! And *there* God spake with Moses, face to face!— How much is connected with some spots! "And Jacob awoke—and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven."

JULY 12.—"*I die daily.*" 1 Cor. xv. 31.

WE need not confine the meaning; but take the expression in all its latitude of import. In what

ense could not Paul make this acknowledgment? n what sense is it not possible, or proper, for us to nake it?

First. He died daily, because he professed to reach the Gospel, in constant hazard of life. "In abours," says he, "more abundant, in stripes above neasure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save ne. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I toned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a lay I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, n perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, n perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; n weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Well might *he* affirm, "I die daily."— But in this sense, you say, the words are not applica- ble to us. It is true, from many of his dangers you are secure. Your religion is not exposing you to the loss of your life; or even of your liberty, or your substance. But do not even *you* die daily? Are you not in jeopardy every hour? Are you not sur- rounded by wicked and unreasonable men, whose vices and passions would destroy you, without the restraining providence of God? Are you not liable to a thousand accidents? Do not

> "Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
> "To push us to the tomb?
> "And fierce diseases wait around,
> "To hurry mortals home?"

What a frail thing is the human body! How strange hat such a curious machine, composed of such a multitude of delicate organs, should continue so ong in force and operation! Know you not that he heart beats seconds; and that sixty movements f the blood take place every minute—so that sixty

times every minute the question is asked whether we are to live or die! We die daily!

Secondly. Paul could say this, as death was actually invading him daily. And this is the case with us. We are mortal, not only in destination, but state. We decay while we receive sustenance. We talk of dying! But is this a future thing? Have we not always been dying? Why

"The moment we begin to live,
"We all begin to die."

We talk of dying! Why many of us are half dead already; and some much more. Many of our connexions are dead: many of our comforts: many of our hopes. We have buried many of our opportunities, and days, and years—and every year, and every day, brings us near the *entire* end of the whole. It is absurd to confine dying to the act of separation between soul and body—This is only the finishing stroke—We die daily.

Thirdly. Paul, by a moral decease, died daily. So should we. To die to an object, according to the Scripture, is to have no more connexion with it, or attachment to it. Thus the Apostle says to the Romans, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." "How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And this moral dying is frequently expressed by the word crucifixion, in allusion to the mode of it; and to remind us also of the cause, as well as the example. Hence it is said, "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead is" thus "freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Thus the Christian dies daily, by a course of mortification to sin, and the world, and the impression of things seen and temporal, and the power of tempta-

ion—"For they that are Christ's have crucified the lesh, with its affections and lusts."

Fourthly. Paul died daily, by a readiness for his lissolution, whenever it should take place. And the man who is like-minded will feel a concern to be prepared to die—in a good state, and—in a good frame—to die safely—to die cheerfully—to die glorifying God—and having an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. And this must commence with the Apostle's desire, "To win Christ, and be found in him." Nothing can be done to purpose, in our preparation for eternity, till we have said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." The voice from heaven only pronounces those blessed who "die in the Lord"—in a state of union and communion with him—having his righteousness to give them a title to, and his grace to give them a meetness for, the inheritance of the saints in light.

But we should be concerned, not only to be habitually, but actually ready to die. That is, to be in a waiting posture; having our loins girded, and our lamps burning; keeping our consciences clear and calm; drawing off our affections from earth; that when the summons comes we may be willing to depart, and not be constrained to plead for protraction, "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more." In the history of Charles V., emperor of Germany, we are told, that he resigned the reins of government, and retired into a convent in Spain. There he resolved to celebrate his own obsequies. For this purpose, he ordered his tomb to be erected in the chapel of the monastery of St. Justus. Thither, at the proper season, all his domestics were ordered to march in funeral procession, carrying in their hands black tapers. The Emperor followed in his shroud. Arrived at the place, he was laid in his coffin. The service

of the dead was performed: and when the ceremonies were ended, the doors were closed, the attendants dismissed, and he was left alone. After remaining some time in the grave, he arose, and repaired to his apartment, filled with all those awful reflections which the solemnity was adapted to inspire.—Now we do not recommend the practice of such a gloomy and abject superstition. But you may sanctify the expedient, at least, in thought. You may anticipate an event that must befal you. And, oh! that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end! Oh that you would remember, that the service you perform for others, will certainly be required for yourselves! Oh that when you see man going to his long home, and the mourners going about the streets, you would say, "I also am accomplishing, as an hireling, my day; and in a little time, my neighbours, friends, and relations, will seek me—and I shall not be!"

— Would it be improper or useless for you, in imagination, to suppose yourselves—entering your sick-chamber—stretched upon a bed of languishing—dying—wrapped up in your winding-sheet—laid in your coffin—friends, for the last time, touching your cold cheek with their lips or the back of their hand—the lid screwed down—and your remains borne through the mutes at the door—and accompanied to the grave—and left there—while the spirit had returned to God, who gave it. In endeavouring to realize this condition, I ask, How would the world appear? What would you think of the censure or praise of men? What, of many of your pursuits? Would not this check the levity of the mind, and the pride of life?—Would not also this contemplation break the force of surprise?

"Familiar thoughts can slope the way to death."

— But if we think not of the subject, the event will be a sudden precipice.

— The sum of human wisdom is, to keep us from
prise in any thing—the sum of Divine wisdom
to keep us from surprise in death. We know
; how soon the event may come; nor in what
nner it may befall us. It may not wait the close
threescore years and ten; and it may not an-
nce its approach by the common warnings of
kness—If we have not learned this truth already
n our observations of mortality—neither should
be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

JULY 13.—"*I will yet for this be enquired of by
House of Israel, to do it for them.*"
Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

AT is, what he had been promising; and not-
thstanding the freeness and certainty of the en-
gement. Such is the revealed "will" of God.
d his will is *law*; and law from which there lies
appeal. Nothing, therefore, can dispense with the
ligation of prayer.—But let us look at this fact.

As we have no claims upon God, and all he does
: us must be from pure mercy and grace; no one
n deny that he has *a right* to determine the way
which his favours shall be conferred. Nor can
be questioned that he is the most *competent judge*
this case; for his understanding is infinite: he
ows himself and his relations; and he knows us
d our welfare, perfectly.

But let us not suppose that he acts arbitrarily,
ough he may act sovereignly. And let us remem-
r, too, that his acting sovereignly does not consist
his acting without reasons, but in his being go-
ned by reasons which are often far above out of
r sight.

His wisdom and his goodness are to be seen here as plainly as his authority. Some vainly ask, Where is the propriety of prayer? Can prayer be necessary to inform a Being, perfect in knowledge? Or to excite a Being, always ready to do good? Or to induce a Being, with whom there is no variableness, to change his measures? But the question is beside the mark. What is not necessary as to God, may be necessary as to *us*. Religion is founded not in *His* wants, but in *ours*. Does not something of this kind obtain among all ranks and conditions of our fellow-creatures? All-parental as you are, do you always dispense with your child's asking for what he wants? As a master, though willing to forgive, do you not deem it needful to require the servant that has offended you, to confess his fault, and implore pardon?

How many are the advantages arising from God's requiring us to ask, that we may have; and seek, that we may find! The exercise of prayer keeps alive a sense of our indigence and dependence. Every time I go to God in prayer, I am reminded—that I am ignorant, and that he is wise; that I am weak, and that he is powerful; that I am guilty and miserable, and that he is merciful and gracious; that I am nothing, and that he is all in all.

— Prayer, by bringing us into the presence of God, will impress us with its excellencies: and the intercourse we have with him, will lead us to admire, and fear, and love, and resemble him. For we soon catch the spirit, and take off the manners of those with whom we are intimate; especially if they are above us, and are much esteemed by us. It is said, that those who are about the Court have an air and an address peculiar to themselves; and that it is difficult, if not impossible, for another to assume it. A man who is much at the Throne of Grace, will betray it in a manner of feeling, speaking, and acting, that a religious pretender can never entirely exemplify.

— Hereby, too, the blessing is more endeared, nd enhanced. We never much regard what we cquire without application or effort. The effort is kind of price: and we judge of the commodity by he cost. That which *blesses* us, is what relieves ur *wants*; fulfils our *desire*; accomplishes our *hope*; rowns our *sacrifices*. God's blessings are not bestowed upon those who are incapable of feeling heir value—they would *then* yield neither pleasure o the receiver, nor praise to the Giver. His way, herefore, is to make us sensible of our need; to hew us the importance and excellency of the favours; nd to draw forth our souls after them.—Then we re in his way. Then we can plead his promise. For lessed are they that do hunger and thirst after ighteousness; for they shall be filled.

JULY 14.—"*My peace I give unto you.*" John xiv. 27.

PEACE sometimes signifies a confluence of temporal good things. This is not the meaning of it here. Our Saviour himself was poor, and a man of sorrows. And he said to his disciples, In the world ye shall have tribulation. Yet at the same time they were to have peace in him. This peace, therefore, must have been something which trouble could not hinder or injure. It must have been a spiritual privilege —composure of mind; especially—for here is the source of the greatest perplexity and disquietude; the calm of conscience, arising from a hope of our acceptance in the Beloved. Before it can be enjoyed, the awful breach between God and us must be healed; and the blessed partaker of it be able to say, Thou wast angry with me; but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. For there

must be a sense or apprehension of God's favour, which is life. I may be pardoned; but if I am ignorant of my forgiveness, my anxieties and uneasinesses will remain. But when He says to my soul, I am thy salvation, then, being justified by faith, I have peace with God—not only peace with him above, but peace with him within—a peace that passeth all understanding.

For who can adequately conceive the value of this donation? We need not descend into the depths of hell, to enquire what the miserable victims of despair would give for a moment's enjoyment of it. Let those speak who have been convinced of sin, who have felt a wounded spirit, and, expecting to fall into the hand of the living God, have exclaimed, What must I do to be saved! What were the feelings of the man-slayer, with the avenger of blood at his heels! And what was the change he experienced, as soon as he had entered the appointed asylum, and could turn round, and face the foe! Say ye—for ye have realized the blessed transition—ye who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you.

> "'Tis a young heav'n on earthly ground,
> "And glory in the bud."

It is a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. It weans from the world. It enlivens duty. It smooths the rugged path of adversity. It turns a dying chamber into the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.

But the Saviour calls it his peace—"*My* peace I give unto you." It would be a low sense of this, though a true one, that he came and preached it. It was his in an infinitely more expensive way. He procured it for us. He came not to tell us the way to heaven, but to be the way—not to shew us how to make our peace with Gud, but to make it; and he *did* make it—we were reconciled unto God

by the death of his Son. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed—He made peace by the blood of his Cross. And he applies it by the agency of his Holy Spirit; enabling us to believe, and enter into rest; and maintaining our hope in all the changes of life, and under a continued sense of our unworthiness and guilt.

Nor is it more his by derivation, than distinction. Many have peace; but how unlike his! There is the peace of the sinner. This is of Satanic origin. The strong man armed keepeth his palace and his goods in peace. But this peace is worse than war. It is not founded in conviction, but ignorance. It cannot endure thought. It is unworthy of the name of peace—There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. How can a man retire, and go to sleep, when, if he dies before the morning, (and how easily may his bed become his grave!) God is under an oath to destroy him? He denies it, or forgets. —There is the peace of the self-righteous Pharisee; and the peace of the Evangelical hypocrite; both of which will prove as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the Ghost.—There is the peace of the worldling, who, in the calm of his fire-side or evening's walk, musing on his abundance, says, O my soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But he may, that very night, have his soul required of him; and then whose are those things which he has provided? What is it to be at ease in our circumstances, and to enjoy peace with our neighbours, and in our families—while we are at war with God, and his wrath abideth on us!

—But this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian cometh into the land! Look to him. Repair to him. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds." While you neglect Him, you may seek peace, but you will never find it. But he cries—oh! hear him—"Come unto

me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." And is not this the very thing you want? Rest? Rest unto your souls? Believe him. Try his word. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

JULY 15.—"*And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*" Matt. xiii. 53—58.

—HIS own country here means, not Bethany, where he was born, but Nazareth, where he had been brought up—a poor and despised place; so that it was proverbially asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet there was *he* found, who is the King of Glory!

Here he taught in their synagogues. *What* he taught is not recorded. But we may determine the substance of it from his addresses on other occasions, and from the end which he always kept in view—"to seek and to save that which was lost." Of his *manner* of teaching, we cannot form an adequate conception. It was all his own. "Grace was poured into his lips." Even those who derived no

aving advantage from it—even his enemies—said, "Never man spake like this man."

Accordingly, the people here were astonished. Wonder has its place in religion; and there is every thing in the Gospel to call it forth. But many emotions of this kind are not powerful enough to produce any decisive result: and the subjects of them behold, and wonder, and perish. Thus it was here. They acknowledge his works to be mighty works, that is, miraculous; but are offended with his want of education, having been at no university; at the feet of no Gamaliel—never having learned letters. And also because he was not a man of birth and rank; but had relations in common life, and was himself engaged in manual employment. See how the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not. Who can stand before envy and prejudice? If he had the wisdom, and did the works—both of which they admitted; it was the more commendable, and the more marvellous, that he was so pre-eminent without any ordinary helps; and the more likely was he to be divinely inspired. There seemed no other way of accounting for the prodigy. And this seems to strike them. But men do not value things according to their real excellence. And when there is not a cordial liking to any subject, every circumstance which would otherwise befriend, is converted into objections.

In answer to their offence, our Saviour remarks, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." Usefulness depends upon acceptance; and acceptance upon esteem. Hence a bishop is to have a good report of them that are without; and hearers are commanded not only to receive such, but to hold them in reputation. But those who have been above a man in condition, do not like to come down and listen to him as an instructer and reprover: and those who have been his equals, have been too familiar with him, to feel

veneration towards him. Many things, though quite consistent with sanctity, yet breed not that reverence and respect which attach to a man that comes to us, so to speak, from a kind of distance, and is only seen through the medium of his sacred office. The case here stated, is not universally and absolutely true. But it is so, generally and comparatively: and even our Saviour himself was not an exception to it. After this, some of his servants need not be astonished at the treatment they experience. Neither should they fret and complain. They must take human nature as it is, and accommodate themselves prudently, as much as they can innocently, to the actual state of society. This governed the Master; and he assigns it as the reason why he preferred labouring elsewhere—"He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country."

But what a conclusion is here!—"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." *Some* he did. Mark says, He laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them—But what was the prevention of more? He generally required faith in his miraculous exertions. Hence the expressions—Be it unto thee according to thy faith—Believest thou that I am able to do this?—If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. There were, indeed, some cases in which he wrought without this; at least, without the faith of the individual: though even then, faith was found in those who applied on his behalf; or who brought him to Jesus.

But faith is *always* necessary in spiritual operations. He can produce faith within us; but he cannot carry on his works of grace without it. If he could, it would be in contradiction to his word;

and by a blind, positive, physical force, without their knowledge, feeling, wishes, or designs. But this is not his way. He does every thing by faith. We are saved through faith. Hence the importance of believing. The first, the chief concern is, to get faith. Talk not of the sufficiency and excellency of the remedy—it cannot heal us unless it be applied; and it can only be applied by faith. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation—but it is only to every one that believeth.

There is something infinitely evil in unbelief, if we only consider what it *prevents*. It stands, and it is the only thing that does stand, between a sinner and the relief of the Gospel. Let him believe, and he is saved. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that believeth, hath the Son. As to others, the wrath of God abideth on them; for nothing else can withdraw them from under it. The Jews could not enter into Canaan, because of their unbelief. It equally bars heaven against us. But what mighty works attend faith! By faith we are justified. By faith we are sanctified. We stand, we walk, we live by faith.

And, oh! what an injurious bar, to a Christian himself, is unbelief. How much does it hinder him from achieving in a way of duty, and realizing in a way of privilege! What keeps him so weak and wavering? Unbelief. "Surely, if ye will not believe, ye shall not be established." If we depend on our frames and feelings, we draw from a summer-brook, instead of the well of living waters. Pleasing experiences are cordials; but faith is the soul's food. Faith in the promise would immediately tranquillize us, as it did Paul in the storm—"Be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be as it was told me." What keeps a Christian so poor in consolation? Unbelief. "Filled with all joy and peace in believing." "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Who would not, then, by faith, let loose all the sources of Divine mercy and grace?

Who would not cry out, with tears, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief?"

JULY 16.—"*Call to remembrance the former days.*" Heb. x. 32.

THIS will soon convince us, that there is nothing new under the sun; and keep us from saying, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" In many respects we have the advantage. In knowledge, and civilization, and liberty, and trade, and the conveniences and comforts of life, and above all, in spiritual privileges, we far surpass our predecessors.

If we look back to the period of Judaism, we shall have reason to say, "Blessed are our eyes, for they see; and our ears, for they hear: for many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things that we see, and did not see them, and to hear the things that we hear, and did not hear them." They had the type, we have the reality; they had the promise, we have the accomplishment; they had the dawn, we have the day—God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

If we look back to the period previous to the entrance of the Gospel into our own country—what were our ancestors? Naked painted savages in the woods; oppressed by cruel rites; enslaved by idolatry; being without Christ; strangers to the commonwealth of Israel; having no hope, and without God in the world.

We were called Christians long before the Reformation. But look at the period prior to that auspi-

ions events. In what a state of mental degradation are we—religion, superstition—the service, performed in an unknown tongue—the Scriptures, kept from the common people—and nothing suffered to peep or mutter, but as priestcraft allowed!

And when men began to know the words of life, and to serve God in Spirit and in truth, what interdictions were they under: and to what fines, imprisonments, tortures, and deaths, were they exposed by the spirit of persecution,—Popish, and even Protestant! Remember the former times, in which your forefathers endured a great fight of affliction for conscience' sake. Think how they would have refused to see a day in which we sit under our own vine and fig-tree, and none can make us afraid, and the Gospel is spreading far and wide; and individuals, and churches, and communities, combine to make manifest the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge in every place. Christians should judge by a rule of their own; and deem those the best times in which the best cause flourishes most. We therefore live in the most preferable æra the world ever yet witnessed.

But it is well for us also to remember the earlier periods of our own personal history and experience—our days of religious nothingness, when we never called upon his Name, and had no fear of God before our eyes. What feelings does the review of those days require!

But other days, better days, blessed days followed, after we knew God, or rather were known of him. *He* remembers these: "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." And shall we forget them? Can we forget them?

"How sweet their memory still!"

In one respect, the review must be humbling. For how little has our practice corresponded with our profession? or our proficiency with our advantages? Yea, instead of advancing, have not we stood still, or rather have we not gone back? We read of "the first ways of David." They were, alas! his best. The king of Israel never equalled the shepherd of Bethlehem. When at ease in Zion, his soul prospered much less than when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. And have *we* never sighed, "Oh that it was with me as in months past!" Here is the charge, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Let us not deny it; but remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works.

Are we in trouble? Do we see no way for our escape? Does God seem to have forgotten to be gracious? Let us remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. His love, and power, and truth, are still the same. And because he has been my help, therefore, under the shadow of his wing will I rejoice.

JULY 17.—"*Ye have an unction from the Holy One.*" 1 John ii. 20.

WHO is this Holy One? Unquestionably the Lord Jesus. It was one of the names by which he was known in the days of his flesh. The devils knew him by it; and said, We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. Ye denied, said Peter and John to the Jews, the Holy One and the Just. He was so called from the innocency of his life; the purity of his nature; and the eminency of his perfections: and therefore, in a sense, applicable to

to mere creature. God is often called the Holy One, in the Old Testament: and, alluding to the very place where holiness is thrice ascribed to him by the Seraphim, the Evangelist affirms, "This said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." He is relatively, as well as personally, holy; and evengelically, as well as legally. He is as holy in his Gospel, as in his Law. He is as holy in his dispensations, as in his ordinances. He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. He came by water, as well as blood; and gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works—And though he will bring millions from the depraved race of Adam to glory, he will bring them all there, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

And what is this unction from Him? John was a Jew; and well knew that oil, unction, anointing—it is all the same thing—was used, to consecrate—to beautify—to refresh, and delight. The word, therefore, is used, here, for the influence of the Holy Spirit. And this is derived from the Lord Jesus. This was typified in the case of Aaron, when the oil was poured upon his head, and went down to the skirts of his garments. So, here, the unction descends from the head of the Church to the lowest members of the body. Hence it is so often called the Spirit of Christ. It comes to us through his mediation; and it comes to us from his possession. For it was not, as Mr. Howe observes, the design and effect of the sufferings and death of Christ, that the Spirit should be given immediately to any individuals; but that the whole dispensation should be lodged in his hands, and the administration be the honour of his office. He received gifts for men: and this was the chief of them. Being by the right hand of God exalted, says Peter, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit,

he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. He therefore said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you"—"And he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Thus it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. And of his fulness, says every saved, every sanctified sinner, have all we received, and grace for grace.

Have we this unction from the Holy One? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Destitute of this, our religion will be a form of godliness, without the power; practice, without principle; duty, without delight—a task—weariness—vanity. We can only know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.

If strangers to the benefit, let us seek it. We know to whom we are to apply. He is able, he is willing, to give us the supply of his own Spirit. How encouraging to address ourselves to one who loved us, and gave himself for us—who says, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink—who never sent one suppliant empty away—who never will—never can—for he cannot deny himself.

Let us cherish this unction. It is what the Apostle means, when he says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of redemption." Not only does gratitude require this, because of what the Spirit has already done for you; but a concern for your own welfare. What can you do, without his aids and comforts? In consequence of his sin, David feared the entire loss of his agency; and therefore cried, Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me—Yea, he had suffered the loss of

the consolation and support which he alone can give—Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.—Let us in vain desire this unction. Let us make manifest the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge, in every place; in every condition; in every company. Let it so abound in our conduct, temper, and discourse, that we may be distinguished and recommended by it. So that all may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

JULY 18.—"*God, who is rich in mercy.*"
Ephes. ii. 4.

IN a thousand things God entirely eludes our research. In every thing he surpasses our comprehension. But we know that he is merciful—we are sure that he is rich in mercy. And we cannot be too thankful, that the eminence of an attribute, so essential to our happiness and hope, is not obscurely revealed, but so plainly and fully made known, in the works of his hands; the dispensations of his providence; the promises of his Word; the provisions of his house; and the Son of his love.

For who does not need this assurance? The self-righteous Pharisee, who thanks God that he is not as other men are—he does not require it. And the proud pretender, who is free from all sin—he does not require it—he formerly required it; but he has now attained, he is now already perfect. But there are four classes of characters to whom it must be like life from the dead.

First. The victims of affliction. These are not rarely to be met with in this vale of tears. To such we would say—We ask you not what your distresses are; but if oppressed, pray, Lord, undertake for me. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain

thee. Repair not, under the pressure of woe, to the rope, or the bowl of intoxication, or the dissipations of the world—this is like Saul's going to the witch of Endor: but go to the Throne of the Heavenly Grace, imploring the pity of the God of all comfort. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is your welfare that has called forth this seeming severity. He knows your frame. He remembereth that you are dust. He lays upon you no more than he will enable you to bear. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. When the benevolent end of the dispensation is answered, he will readily lay aside the rod, and say, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart towards the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities." For He is rich in mercy.

Secondly. Convinced penitents. They were formerly always extenuating their guilt: now they are dwelling only upon the aggravations of it. Lately they seemed unsusceptible of alarm; but now they refuse to be comforted. Such is their unworthiness! The number and greatness of their sins! They are cast out of his sight! And there is only for *them*, a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation! But oh! awakened sinner, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. There is everlasting consolation, and good hope, through *grace*. With the Lord there is mercy; and with him is plenteous redemption. Judge not of Him by a human standard. Who is a God, like unto Him! View him not through the medium of your own feelings. Believe his own Word, wherein he assures you, that he is ready to forgive; that he will abun-

dantly pardon. Believe his oath, wherein he swears by himself—"As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn, and live ye."

"Raise thy downcast eyes, and see
"What forms His throne surround:
"They, though sinners once, like me,
"Have full salvation found."

— He is rich in mercy.

Thirdly. Desponding backsliders. These, after walking in the way everlasting, have fallen by their iniquity: and perhaps feel more anguish of mind, than when they were first led to repentance. They say, and they say justly, "No one has sinned with such enhancement as I have done. I have sinned against the dearest relations, and under the highest obligations, and against the greatest advantages. I have sinned, after being made to know what an evil and bitter thing it is; and also after tasting that the Lord is gracious. My sin has been more injurious in its effects than that of others: it has more dishonoured religion, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God." All this they ought to feel—Yet must not *they* forget, that He is rich in mercy. It is this belief that will break the heart most, and make it sorrow after a godly sort. It is this alone that will lead them forward, with weeping and supplications, saying, Lord, take away all iniquity: create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. And He—will He refuse to reply, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him"?

"Return, ye wandering souls, return,
"And seek His tender breast;
"Call back the memory of those days,
"When there you found your rest.—

— "Behold, great God, we come to Thee,
"Though blushes veil our face;
"Constrain'd our last retreat to seek
"In thy much-injured grace."

Fourthly. Persevering believers. These have holden on their way; and, having obtained help of God, continue to this day. They ought, therefore, to feel thankful. But it becomes them, also, to be humble. Indeed, the more they advance in the Divine life, the more will they be dissatisfied with themselves. They will be deeply affected with a sense of their unprofitableness, and numberless infirmities. If their outward conduct has been fair to men, they know how little their heart has been right with God. They know, the sins of their holy things would be enough to condemn them, if God should bring them into judgment with him. Their language, therefore, still is, God be merciful to me, a sinner. This is their only relief—He is rich in mercy. And living—and dying—they "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

JULY 19.—"*As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about—This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*" Ezek. i. 28.

THERE is always ground for the Prophet's complaint: "Seeing many things, they *observe* not."—How often do even objects, peculiarly designed and adapted to excite and impress, fail to strike, or at least to awaken any proper attention! This is the case with the rainbow. Children wonder at the novelty, grandeur, and construction of the figure; but seldom ask a question about it. The common people, who are much abroad in the field, rarely give it a gaze; and never connect a thought with it, but as it may be supposed, by the time of its exhibition, to intimate the state of the weather. And what does the philosopher better? In the pride of science, he

despises the vulgar: but, though able to explain the mediate cause of the phenomenon, he never looks after any thing the Scripture says concerning it. But who is, *here*, not only a naturalist, but a moralist? And not only a moralist, but a Christian? A Christian in the field, as well as in the temple? making that which is seen and temporal, the means of communion with that which is unseen and eternal?

The rainbow may be viewed three ways. First. Physically. Thus it is, in the sky, a semicircle of various colours, which appears in showery weather. It is rendered by the sun-beams on a cloud. When there is a moist and dark cloud opposite the orb of day, and disposed to receive and reflect his rays, the bow is seen; and never without this concurrence.

Secondly. Federally. The first time we read of it in the Book of Genesis, is in this covenant relation. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." It was in being before. But now it was made a divinely constituted sign, or token. Thus it should lead us to think of the holiness and justice of God, in the destruction of the old world: and also of his forbearance and goodness, in engaging not to destroy it in like manner again; and in affording a sensible assurance of it. The appearance may be, in some measure, viewed as even typical of the event. The bow was early the principal weapon of war; and soon became the emblem of it. David says, "He hath bent his bow, and made ready his arrows upon the string, to shoot at the persecutors." But here is a bow without arrows, and without a string! When a man uses the bow in a hostile manner, the ends are towards himself; and the back is towards

the enemy. But here the bow is reversed—the back is towards heaven; and the ends towards the earth. And therefore if it had arrows upon the string, they must be discharged upwards, not downwards—the earth is safe, and has nothing to fear from it. If this should be thought more curious than wise; yet the bow thus viewed, if not a type, is a proof and a pledge. It says, the flood is gone—never to return! And here we feel a perfect certainty. However long or violently the rain falls, we are not alarmed. We look to the bow in the cloud; and are sure, that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." And why do we not feel equally sure, with regard to another interposition?

For thirdly. The bow is to be viewed evangelically. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Here we find God doing, in a nobler case, what he did after the deluge. Here we find him—with a better, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. And to render the allusion similar, and to afford strong consolation to those who are fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them; we have his oath, accompanied with a sign, or token, that should subdue every apprehension? Where? What is it? "Upon the likeness of the throne," says Ezekiel,

"was the likeness as *the appearance of a man above upon it.*" We know to whom this refers. "And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it; from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downwards, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of *the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so* was the appearance of the brightness round about—*This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*"—An emblem of his glory, both as to his person, and importance. Who can help admiring the rainbow? It is one of the most *beautiful* appearances in Nature. How various the colours! Yet the celestial tints are united; and, though distinct, melt into each other, to make one astonishing whole. And his Name is Wonderful. What a combination of excellencies is found in him—"He is altogether lovely."—

> "All human beauties, all divine,
> "In our Beloved meet and shine."

All the charms of Nature; all the attractions of all creatures in earth and in heaven; are blended in him, and infinitely surpassed—"For how great is *his* goodness; and how great is *his* beauty!"

It also reminds us of his importance. He insures us safety—covenant safety. We are justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him. He is the hope—the consolation of Israel. He that believeth on him shall not—cannot perish; but hath everlasting life.

Let us look to him, and be comforted, against every adverse threatening. Afflictions cannot overwhelm us. The Law cannot curse us. Enemies cannot injure us. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death,

nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

JULY 20.—"*They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.*" Acts iv. 13.

THIS recognition is explained two ways. Some take it literally, as referring to the persons of the Apostles. These, their arraigners remembered, when they looked at them, for they had seen them before in company with him. And this, it is more than probable, was the case. For some of this very council attended his examination on the night of his apprehension. Yea, he was examined in the very house of this Caiaphas—and we are assured, that Peter, on the occasion, went into the High Priest's palace, to see the end. Jesus, also, had openly taught in the Temple, when, more than once, some of these men were present, disputing with him; and he was always accompanied by his disciples—No wonder, therefore, that Peter and John were recognized by them.—But others take it, in allusion to their qualities, behaviour, and mode of speaking: connecting it particularly with the former words. And "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled—and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus:" remarking that they were of the same party; or, as we should say, of the same stamp. So the sentence has been commonly understood. And three remarks may be made upon it.

First. Some have been with Jesus. Peter and John had been, as to his bodily presence, with him, for several years, in public and in private; going out and coming in with him—And who is not ready to envy them such intercourse? But he was received up into glory: and they who had known him after the flesh, knew him so no more. Yet he has promised his people his spiritual presence, to the end of the world. And thus, though now invisible, he is yet accessible. Hereafter they will be for ever with the Lord. But this heaven begins on earth. They were naturally without Christ; though not as to dispensation, yet as to experience. But their religion began with an introduction to *him*—They were made sensible of their need of him. They sought him; and they found him. They had much to do with him then; and they have had much to do with him ever since. And they only go on well in religion, as they are able to say, "When I awake, I am still with thee"—"I am continually with thee." They are with him—in his Word—in his House—at his Table—with him in the closet—in the field—

> "Where'er they seek him he is found,
> "And every place is holy ground."

They are with him, as pupils are with their teacher—as servants are with their master; waiting upon him all the day—as followers, with their leader; willing to follow him whithersoever he goeth—as soldiers, with their commander; fighting the good fight of faith—For "they that be *with* him, are called, and chosen, and faithful"—And "he that is not *with* him, is against him."

Secondly. It is expected, that they who are with him, should resemble him. It is proverbially said, Tell me a man's company, and I will tell you his character. And it is well known, that like not only attracts, but begets like. Hence the importance we

attach to the choice of associates. Hence we say to the unmarried—Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Hence, to the young—He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. If we enter the house of mourning, we instantly catch the sympathy. The heart softens. The countenance contracts. The eye melts—How different are our sensations in the circle of festivity and mirth! It is said, that those who live at Court, have a manner of their own, which others cannot successfully put on.

All association, however limited, produces some influence. But the conformity will be in proportion—to the degree of the intimacy—and the constancy of the intercourse—and the love we have to the individual—and the veneration we feel for his greatness. Now all these will apply supremely to the Christian's acquaintance with Christ. And therefore the resemblance must be the greater—especially when we add to all this—That it is the duty, and the main business of his religion, to imitate him—For he that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk as he walked. And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Thirdly. This conformity will not be overlooked. The Christian himself may not be sensible of it; for the more progress he makes in the Divine life, the more humble will he be. Moses was not aware of the brilliancy of his face, when he came down from *being with God;* and was surprised to see the people dazzled at the glory of his countenance. And Paul said, I have not attained, I am not already perfect.—But God will take knowledge of it—Angels will take knowledge of it—Ministers will take knowledge of it—His fellow Christians will take knowledge of it—The world will take knowledge of it—His profiting will appear unto all men.—And though the wicked cannot be pleased with it; yet they are aware of what, by their profession, Christians ought

be; and their consistency *will* enthrone them in their conviction, and put to silence their ignorance; and *may* constrain them to glorify God in the day of visitation.

If persons are seen firm in principle; fearless in duty; zealous in the cause of God; yet humble and lowly; and gentle and tender; and patient in suffering; and ready to forgive—no one need be told with whom *they* have been.

So, if you are proud, and vain, and worldly-minded, and avaricious, and revengeful, and censorious, and unkind; we do not require you to tell us with whom *you* are most intimate. And though we do not believe in witchcraft, we know that you have a familiar Spirit—and we know who, and what, it is. And "glory not, and lie not, against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

JULY 21.—"*O taste and see that the Lord is good.*" Psalm xxxiv. 8.

THAT God is good, is too obvious to be denied; though, alas! we are so little affected with it. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. As to *ourselves*, he made us—and why did he not make us reptiles? He placed us so high in the scale of beings; and

furnished for our reception a world filled with his bounty and beauty. He gives the sweet interchange of hill, and vale, and wood, and lawn. He makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice; and, in the succession and produce of the seasons, crowns the year with his goodness. He not only provides for our suppprt, but for our comfort. He not only feeds and clothes, but feasts and adorns us. All our senses might have been so many inlets of pain, but they are the avenues of a thousand pleasures: and we are furnished with the most delightful colours, and sounds, and relishes, and perfumes. Our food might have been rendered distasteful; but He has made it pleasant; and connected gratification with the most necessary act of life: so that no one eats from a sense of duty, or to avoid death; but for pleasure.

Distinguished from this general kindness of God, there is, however, a peculiar goodness; and which regards us, as *sinners*. It is called, in the Scriptures, mercy and grace. It led Him to remember us in our low estate, and to make provision for our salvation from every effect of the Fall. He spared not his own Son. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. And in him all things are now ready for our acceptance. And, unworthy as we are, we may obtain all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,—and—for ever. Herein is love! And this favour which he bears unto his people, and which regards the soul and eternity; this good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush is what we are supremely to seek after.

But what is the best way to know this goodness? David does not say, Hear, and know; read, and know; believe, and know—but, *taste* and *see* that the Lord is good. That is, apply to him for yourselves, instead of relying on the authority of others; as in a case of disputed relish you determine, not by testimony, but taste. In other words, it means

experience. Experience is knowledge derived from experiment, in contradistinction from theory. Since the mighty mind of Bacon beat down hypothesis, and introduced the inductive system, philosophy has reasoned from facts; and experimental philosophy has been much applauded. Why then should we ridicule experimental religion? Is there no standard in divinity to which we can appeal? Is there no test to be applied to the truth of pious pretensions? Are there no facts to bear out or to contradict what the Scripture says of sin? of repentance? of hope? and of peace and joy in believing?

Some, and in our day many, know Divine things in a way of speculation. But they are not under their operation: they feel not the powers of the world to come. And these are the most unlikely characters to be wrought upon. They are familiar with the truths of the Gospel; they admit all the preacher advances; they acknowledge all he proves: but it has no influence over the heart and life. They believe in hell, but make no attempt to flee from the wrath to come. They believe in heaven, but do not set their affection on things above. They believe in the value of the soul, and that its redemption ceaseth for ever; and yet neglect the only opportunity to embrace the things that belong to their peace. They go through the Bible; but its threatenings do not alarm, and its promises do not allure them. They resist every motive. They have been wooed and awed a thousand times, in vain. They see and approve better things, and follow worse. They are not happy, and contrive not to be miserable. They are in the jaws of death, and yet are at ease in Zion—What paradoxes! What contradictions are you! Of what worth is *your* knowledge? To know a refuge, and never enter it! To know a remedy, and never apply it! To know good, and never partake of it! This will not only leave you to perish, but deprive you of excuse; and aggravate your sin and

condemnation. Like Uriah, with his fatal letter, you carry information that will place you in the front of the battle. Be not satisfied, therefore, till you know these things to purpose—which can only be, by your knowing them experimentally.

Then your heart will be established with grace; and you will be so confirmed in the truth, that you will not be led away by the error of the wicked, to fall from your own stedfastness.

Then you will desire greater degrees of it; and, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, your prayer will be, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

Then you will be excited and qualified to address others: for you will speak from the heart, and recommend a tried remedy—a remedy that has effectually cured yourselves. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

JULY 22.—"*To him that overcometh.*"
Rev. iii. 21.

THERE are seven addresses of this kind, closing the seven epistles, which John was to write, and send to the Churches which were in Asia: to Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Pergamos, and Thyatira, and Sardis, and Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Overlooking what is peculiar in each of them, let us notice what is common to all. Four things are so.

First. All of them regard a particular character. It is a successful soldier—Him that *overcometh.* This reminds us of the nature of the Christian's life. It is a warfare. It was such, unquestionably, in the Apostles' days. We read of their wrestling with principalities and powers: of their fighting the good fight of faith: of their resisting unto blood.

f it be said, "The language is figurative;" we allow t. But it must, or we are trifled with, imply ealities—And what *are* these? If it be said, "Reli-ion is not the same thing now, as it was then;" re ask, When was it changed? And by whom? And what *is* it at present? What would be thought f a preacher, who should come forward in public, nd say, A religious life *was* a difficult thing once; ut it is a very easy one now. The first Christians ere required, in order to be the disciples of Christ, o deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and ollow him, in the regeneration: but all this is dis-ensed with now! He may prophesy falsely—and he people may love to have it so: but what will be one in the end thereof? If, therefore, you think ourselves in the way everlasting, without knowing ny thing of this spiritual warfare, you are in a itiable condition—and pertain to the strong man rmed, who keeps *his* palace and goods in peace.

Secondly. All of them are attached to an indivi-ual—Not to *them* that conquer; but to—*him* that vercometh. As much as to say—Each is perceived y me in the crowd: and if all in the Church should rove corrupt, and one only maintain his fidelity—int, yet pursuing; let *him* not be ashamed, or fraid. *He* shall be confessed before my Father and he holy angels. For *him* that honours me, I will onour.

Thirdly. All of them contain the *assurance of me reward* of grace. The food of Paradise—a rown of life—the hidden manna, and the white tone—the morning star—white raiment—a pillar n the Temple of God—a seat with the Saviour n his Throne—But these—Who can describe? or omprehend? They are yet to be revealed. But e know enough to animate us in the conflict; nd to convince us, that godliness is profitable unto ll things.

Fourthly. All represent the *Lord Jesus, as the*

Author and Bestower of every honour and indulgence. *I* will make; *I* will give; *I* will grant—says *He* who procured all for us—and in whom all fulness dwells. The joy set before him, for which he endured the Cross, and despised the shame, was the gratification of his benevolence, in receiving gifts for men. And he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. He saves them spiritually now. And he shall raise up their bodies at the last day. And he shall say to those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

He shall come to be glorified *in* his saints; and to be admired *in* all them that believe. Amen.

JULY 23.—"*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*" Psalm lxxxvi. 5.

THE first word, "for," shews that the text contains a reason for something; and it was this, as we see by the preceding verse—"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." We learn from it, of what importance it is, to place and keep the Supreme Being before the eye of the mind, in an amiable and inviting character, when we have to do with him. Tell me not, there is danger in such representations—they may gender presumption. They may. Every thing is liable to abuse. But we are saved by hope. By withdrawing his confidence in God, man fell; and he can only be restored, by replacing it in him. The first step of a sinner, in returning to God, must result from this trust. Accordingly, the design of Revelation is to produce and

pport it. "For whatsoever things were written aforeme, were written for our learning, that we, through tience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have pe." The same is said of the mediation of Christ—By him, we believe in God, who raised him up from e dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope ight be in God." More are destroyed by despair, an by presumption. When once a man says, here is no hope, he becomes abandoned; and the pondence he feels, is the strongest link in the ain that binds him to an unconverted state. Let ere be, therefore, always a refuge open, and into hich a sinner, when he looks back, and wishes to ter, may return. Tell him that, yet there is room. ell him that, God is good; and ready to forgive; nd plenteous in mercy unto all them that call pon him.

And, from hence, let me also learn, that—when e have no comfort arising from personal assurnce, there is encouragement enough in the general iews which the Scripture gives us of God to inuce us to wait on the Lord, and keep his way. avid does not, here, say, I will lift up my soul to im; for he is *my* God, and he has given me the eritage of them that fear his Name: but he looks r his goodness, and readiness to forgive, and the lenteousness and impartiality of his mercy—These nsiderations do not require me to ascertain, before come to him, that I am a saint; but tell me to me, as a sinner; and assure me, that he will in no ise cast me out. When I know not that I *have* ace, how delightful is it to know that it is attainble; and to hear a voice, saying, Whosoever will, t him take of the water of life freely! Thus Mr. cott said, when dying, that those Scriptures reshed and comforted him most, which were not nited to a particular class, but open to all.

Yet, however good, and forgiving, and merciful, e is—this is nothing to those who refuse or neglect

to—"call upon him." Such blessed assurances are not intended to make us careless; but to excite and animate our applications to him. Prayer is the way in which he, who has a right to determine, and who cannot err, has chosen, for our obtaining his favours —Yet I will be enquired of. Ask, and ye shall have. Seek, and ye shall find.

Those, therefore, that live without prayer, are shut out from the blessedness. But this is not all. They incur, also, the curse, which results from the contempt of his grace. There is no aggravation of misery, like the consciousness of patience exhausted, kindness abused, opportunity lost. But lost entirely by our own fault! Lost for ever! *This* conviction will be the food of the worm that never dies, and the fuel of the fire that never shall be quenched.

JULY 24.—"*Prove me now.*" Mal. iii. 10.

THERE is nothing of which men are more tenacious, than the honour of their veracity. How offended do they feel, if we seem to suspect the truth of their word, by requiring a pledge or voucher, before we can venture upon it. If a king were to address his subjects in a way of privilege; and they should say—We must try thy faithfulness before we can trust it—he would consider himself insulted, and, in wrath, have nothing to do with them. God is veracity itself; and magnifies his Word above all his Name. And he might justly say to us—Such are my declarations—dishonour me not, by requiring any confirmation—I am entitled to implicit credence—and if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. But he knoweth our frame; and he knoweth the absolute importance of our confidence in him—and therefore he allows us to acquire it in

our own way—and seems more concerned for our satisfaction, than for his own glory.

And yet hereby he glorifies himself too: for by this method he not only shows his kindness and condescension in accommodating himself to our infirmities; but obtains a sensible and satisfactory conviction in favour of his truth. In addition to testimony, we are furnished with experience. What we have read and heard, we have brought to trial —and have demonstrated ourselves. So that we do not merely believe. There must be, indeed, a degree of faith to induce us to make the trial—but when we have made it, and made it successfully, the proof increases the confidence of faith—and he that *thus* believeth hath the witness in himself.

Hence, when God invites us to prove him, it is not sinful to do it—yea, it would be sinful to refuse. We see this in the case of Ahaz. "Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." He did not decline it from confidence in God, or from humility—but from desperation or indifference. "Not I—it is useless." Isaiah so understood it, as appears from his answer and complaint: "Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?" When He allows a privilege, it becomes us gratefully to use it: we reflect upon his kindness and wisdom if we do not. Some, like Gallio, care for none of these things. They do not think religion or revelation worthy of proof—Hume said he had never read through the New Testament in his life! As much as to say, It is nothing to me, whether these things be true or false. I will take no pains to ascertain whether we have souls, as well as bodies; whether another world succeeds this; whether, after death, there be a judgment, or a heaven or a hell!

There is, indeed, a censurable proving of God; and it is more than once charged upon the Jews of old. It was founded in unbelief, and led them to dare his judgments. Thus Pharaoh, and thus Adam and Eve, tried his word, in his threatenings—This is always wrong. First, because, if the trial proves the denunciation true, the proof is useless; for it is derived from the infliction of the evil itself: and we are convinced by being punished. Secondly, we cannot put the menaces of God to the test, but by criminal conduct—It is only by sinning, that we *can* try whether what he has *threatened* against sin will be accomplished—as the practice is the condition on which the penalty is suspended. But it is otherwise with the promises of God—if we find them true, we are saved and happy: and we can only seek the proof of their truth, in what is good and improving; in praying; in obedience; in the use of all the means which God has ordained.

Let us then prove him—and see whether his word will come to pass or not. Let us prove him with regard to the freeness of his mercy. For he hath said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Let us prove him with regard to the efficacy of his Grace. For he hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Let us prove him with regard to the care of his Providence. For he hath said, "There is no want to them that fear him." "He careth for you." "The hairs of your head are all numbered." Let us prove him with regard to the advantage of benevolence. For he hath said, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the

saints, and do minister." Let us prove him with regard to the blessedness of his service. For he hath said, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "There is no man, that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

By how many millions *has* all this been proved! His word *is* a tried word. And it has never failed in the trial; and never will.

Let us make the trial for ourselves, and set to our seal that God is true. Thus we shall become his witnesses to others, and be able to say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

JULY 25.—"*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*" Acts iii. 22, 23.

THERE was a remarkable resemblance between Moses and the Messiah, which it would be easy to trace. But the likeness here spoken of regards his office. Moses was a prophet; a peculiar prophet; a pre-eminent prophet. He introduced and established the whole of the Jewish dispensation with miracles, wonders, and signs. He was the mediator between

God and the people. Other prophets received divine communications through various mediums; but he received every thing from God immediately. "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream—my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my House—with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." But if "the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Yea, in all things he has the pre-eminence. Moses was faithful as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own House. The commission of Moses was confined to one nation; Christ is not only the glory of his people Israel, but a light to lighten the Gentiles —the light of the world.

Every office the Saviour sustains requires a corresponding disposition in those to whom he is sent. As he is a prophet, we are commanded to "hear him." It cannot mean a mere hearing. Then many would be safe who are condemned already—but it includes our believing his instructions with a faith unfeigned, and our cordial submission to them; or, as the Apostle expresses it, our obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered us. Blessed are they that hear the word of God and "keep it." If he commands us to lay up treasure in heaven; and we mind earthly things—if he tells us to deny ourselves, and take up our Cross, and follow him; and we live to the lusts of men—if he says, Look unto me, and be ye saved; and we go about to establish our own righteousness: we do not hear him—but despise and reject him. He that hath his commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth him—and he it is that heareth him.

We are not only to hear him, but to hear him "in all things whatsoever he shall say unto us." Some dislike the mysterious parts of Christianity: some, the humiliating: some, the practical. But the only inquiry of a true disciple is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He will not dictate; he will not object; he will not prefer—but say, "I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." The test of real obedience is, to "do all things without murmurings and disputings."

Notwithstanding our duty and our responsibility, it is here supposed that some "will not hear this Prophet." This is a sad intimation: and we might wonder at the fact. But the depravity of human nature will account for it; and all history confirms it. Some ridicule and oppose. Many never attend the means of Grace. Numbers have only "a form of godliness," while denying the power thereof.

And to what are they exposed? "It shall come to pass that every soul that will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Mark the impartiality of the sentence—"every soul." The refusers may be many; and they may differ from each other. But though each may turn to his own way, all are going astray. There is only one path of life: but there are many avenues to death. And it matters not what our particular character is, whether profligate or formalist, Pharisee or hypocrite —*he* that believeth not shall be damned—and without holiness *no* man shall see the Lord.—See the nature of the doom—"shall be cut off." This is not correction, but excision. Not, however, annihilation—this would be a privilege. They shall seek death; but they shall not find it. In vain will they ask the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them. The penalty is not the loss of their being, but of their happiness and of their hope; the destruc-

tion of body and soul in hell for ever.—Observe the dreadfulness of the aggravation—"from among the people." They are intermixed now; and some of them very peculiarly. They attend in the same Sanctuary; they live under the same roof; they are united by the ties of friendship and of blood. But their privileged situation and condition only evinced and increased their depravity. "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly; and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Their present advantages, therefore, will afford them no security. Neither will they be able to *retain* them. The wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. But severed from the just, they will be led forth with the workers of iniquity; and carry away with them into the place of torment, only the remembrance and the guilt of all they neglected and abused here.

"See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if WE TURN AWAY FROM HIM THAT SPEAKETH FROM HEAVEN!"

JULY 26.—"*The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*" Matt. xiii. 44.

How well may the Saviour call the Gospel a treasure! The tongue of an angel could not describe its value and preciousness. It meets and relieves every want of the soul. It blesses us with all spiritual blessings. It is the true riches. Unsearchable riches. Durable riches. It profits in the day

Saul, who was searching, when Samuel met him; t was for his father's asses, and not for the king- . Thus the Lord is found of them that sought not; and asked not for him. Matthew was g at the Receipt of Custom, when the Saviour Follow me. Saul was in a journey of iniquity, the Saviour appeared to him in the way, and him by his grace. Some have gone to the se of God, from mere custom, or curiosity, or a n to ridicule; but have returned to pray, and said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? But, Henry, Though he is sometimes found of them seek him not, he is always found of them that him. This was the case with Cornelius. He a devout man, and feared God, with all his house; ng and giving alms always, *when* Peter was sent ll him words by which he was to be saved. anael had retired beneath the fig-tree, to read, reflect, and pray, when the Saviour took know- e of him, and said, Thou shalt see greater things these. And there are those now, who are awak- , rather than enlightened: they feel their spiritual s, and are using the means of grace. And what- ignorance, or legality, mixes with their efforts

we conceal it. The way, therefore, is here used for the end: and hiding refers not to secrecy, but safety. The allusion is to that holy jealousy recommended by the Apostle, when he says—Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it: looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. To that trembling at God's word—when we are more affected with the inviting, than with the awful parts. To that solicitude to obtain, which always genders apprehension. Oh! how shall I make all this my own! Oh! if I should miss—or lose! What must I do to be saved!

Secondly. He feels joy thereof. Not that firm and glorious joy which arises in the established Christian, from a consciousness of possession, and who can say, I know that my Redeemer liveth: but the joy that results from discovery of the reality, the excellency, the suitableness, the all-sufficiency, the attainableness, of the blessing; and is called, Rejoicing in hope. The patient, while the disease yet oppresses him, cannot feel at ease; but he is gladdened when he hears of the arrival of a physician, bringing with him a remedy that was never applied in vain.

Thirdly. He goeth—for now it is impossible for him, like many, to sit still—and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field. That is—he is fully determined to submit to the cost of procuring it, whatever it may be. We can offer no equivalency for the possession: nor is this the meaning of the word. In *this* way, were we to buy, it would be without money, and without price. But the meaning is simply *exchange;* as, in buying, we part with something to gain something. Hereby, we shew our estimation: for what stronger proof can we give of our valuation of an object, than parting with all we have for the sake of it?

And the case here is such, that we *must*

make a choice, and a sacrifice, to evince our preference, and attain our desire. Some things must be absolutely given up. Some, conditionally. And all, as to supreme regard and dependence. Are we willing, then, to part with our sins? All our sins? Even our bosom lusts? The right hand? The right eye?—Are we willing to part with our own wisdom? not leaning to our own understanding, but receiving the Kingdom of God as little children, and becoming fools, that we may be wise?—Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? not with the practice of obedience, morality, and good works; but only the substitution of them in the room of the Saviour; and reliance on them for our acceptance before God; and the pleading of them as a title to heaven—instead of saying, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—Are we willing to part with the world? The promises of superiors? The applause of companions? The smiles of friends? The ties of the dearest relations? For "he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

This is a hard saying. But every thing requires sacrifice, and every thing in proportion to the importance of the attainment. And, here, the prize is infinite. And we are more than indemnified for all we suffer or lose. "Verily I say unto you, There is no man, that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

JULY 27.—"*This grace wherein we stand.*"
Rom. v. 2.

WHAT is this state? And what is this standing? The state, is a state of *grace;* and means, the privileged condition in which all Christians are found,

though they were by nature children of wrath, even as others. It is expressed, by our Apostle, in the preceding words—Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into *this* grace.

It may well be called this grace; for it only flows from, and only proclaims, the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, by Christ Jesus. How dreadful is it to have God for our adversary!—He, in whom we live!—He, who is about our path, and our lying down!—He, on whose side all creatures rise up, and range themselves!—He, whose look is death, and whose frown is hell! What were our alarms, when we began to discover our danger; and conscience induced the cry, "What must I do to be saved!" And when we saw the storm passing off; when we were told that the dreadful breach was made up; when we believed that God was pacified towards us for all that we had done—what were our feelings then—but life from the dead? And in that day we said, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me."

But we may be reconciled to another, so as to be forgiven, and not be admitted into the intimacies of friendship. After Absalom was, through the intercession of Joab, allowed to return to Jerusalem, two years elapsed before he was allowed to see the King's face. But God favours us with the most familiar intercourse and communion. We come boldly to the Throne of Grace. In every thing, by prayer and supplication, we make known our requests. We dwell in his house. We eat at his table. We walk with God. We lean on his arm, and on his bosom. He honours us with his confidence, and trusts us with his secrets. He allows us to put him in remembrance, and plead with him; and say—can his condescension go further?—"Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me."

This Grace takes in, also, approbation and complacency. He takes pleasure in them that fear him. He rests in his love. He joys over them with singing. They are his children, his bride, his jewels, his glory. And as their persons, so their services are accepted in the Beloved. Poor as they are, he smiles upon them. Their prayer is his delight; and their alms are the odour of a sweet smell. He views their motive, and passes by their mistakes. He regards their wish and design; and says, in their failures, "It is well that it was in thy heart."

Hence follows sympathy and compassion. What is done to them, he resents as a personal injury: for he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. In all their affliction, he is afflicted. And though he corrects them, it is for their profit. He likes the rod with reluctance, and he lays it aside with pleasure. He cannot withstand their yielding and tears. Is Ephraim my dear son; is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.

"So fathers their young sons chastise,
"With gentle hand, and melting eyes;
"The children weep beneath the smart,
"And move the pity of their heart.

In *this* grace they *stand*. Standing, here, intends firmness, stability, permanence. It is sometimes opposed to condemnation—If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall *stand?* To which we may answer—No one that appeals to his own obedience; but every one that is found in Christ: for there is no condemnation to them that are in him. Or *who* is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession

for us—Hence, without presumption, they may exclaim,

"Bold shall I *stand* in that great day,
"For who aught to my charge shall lay?
"While, through his blood, absolved I am
"From sin's tremendous curse and shame!"

— Sometimes it is also opposed to defeat. Take to you the whole armour of God—that ye may *stand* in the evil day; and, having done all, may *stand*. And of this, they may be assured; for whatever disproportion there is between them and their enemies, the *worm* Jacob shall thresh the *mountains*. Some warriors have barely overcome; another such victory would have almost ruined them: but a Christian, having vanquished all his adversaries, stands, with his feet on their necks; and is ready to engage as many more—Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

The more privileged any condition is, the more anxieties does it awaken. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what a Christian must feel, if he apprehended any uncertainty, as to the state he is in. But that state is as safe as it is blessed. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Arise, my soul, my joyful powers,
"And triumph in my God:
"Awake, my voice, and loud proclaim
"His *glorious* grace abroad.

"He rais'd me from the deeps of sin,
"The gates of gaping hell;
"And fix'd my standing more secure
"Than 'twas before I fell."

JULY 28.—"*Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*" 1 Chron. xvi. 10.

—AND yet many believe, or pretend to believe, hat religion is a joyless thing!

The *heart* has very little, if any, share in other njoyments. These delights only gratify the appe-ites, and strike the senses, and charm the imagi-ation. But where is the heart? Even in laughter he *heart* is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is eaviness. In religion, the heart finds relief, repose, tisfaction, joy.

Yes, "the heart of those who are fully assured f their condition; who have already attained, or ave far advanced in the Divine life." Nay—ays the Prophet—Let the heart of them rejoice hat *seek* the Lord. And there are three reasons or this.

First. Because it is an evidence of grace. They ay draw a conclusion against themselves, and refuse o be comforted; but no man can seek to know, nd enjoy, and serve, and resemble, God, from mere ature. Actions may not indicate the state of the ind; but desires spring from it. We may be rced to do; but we cannot be compelled to prefer, d to choose.

Secondly. Because their success is sure. This the case in no other pursuit. In the fields of orldly labour, we may spend our strength for ought, and in vain. A rival may bear off from us prize, which we have long been chasing, and at ie very moment we are seizing it. The cup of njoyment, filled with eager hope, is often dashed to ie ground from the very lip that touches it. But ieir heart *shall* live that seek God. He that goeth rth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall *doubtless* turn again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with m. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after ghteousness; for they shall be filled. Is there un-

faithfulness with God? Did he ever say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain?

Thirdly. Because, when they *have* found, their aim and their wish in seeking are fully answered. All they can desire, is treasured up in him: and they that seek the Lord shall not want *any* good thing. As to success in other cases, the wise man tells us, all is vanity and vexation of spirit—vexation, if we lose; and vanity, if we gain. To one of these alternatives, we are inevitably subjected. We must be disappointed, either in acquiring them—and this is often the case; or in possessing them—and this is always the case.

"In vain we seek a heav'n below the sky;
"The world has false, but flattering charms:
"Its distant joys shew big in our esteem,
"But lessen still, as they draw near the eye:
"In our embrace the visions die;
"And when we grasp the airy forms,
"We lose the pleasing dream."

But while every thing earthly falls short of hope, it is not possible to form an expectation adequate to the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints. What is it to have God himself for our portion and exceeding joy! To be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ! To realize a happiness, that solitude increases, that trouble improves, that death perfects! As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

While thus the heart of them that seek him should rejoice; the heart of others should be induced to seek him. At present, he is not far from any one of you. He is even inviting you to seek him. But, yet a little while, and it will be too late. Therefore, seek ye the Lord while he may be found; and call ye upon him while he is near.

JULY 29.—"*To whom he shewed himself alive after his passion.*" Acts i. 3.

How much will eternity reveal to our astonished minds! and, in reference to a thousand things, we may safely follow the advice of the Poet—

"Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore."

The Scripture is given to establish our faith, and comfort our hearts, and sanctify our lives; but not to amuse us, and to gratify our curiosity.—Our Saviour rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven: but between these events there elapsed a considerable portion of time. During these intervening weeks, where was he? And how employed? One thing only we know—that he frequently showed himself to his disciples. The fact cannot be questioned.

But what purposes were these intermediate appearances intended to answer? The Lord does not always give an account of any of his matters; and we ought to be peculiarly cautious in assigning reasons for *his* conduct who says, "My ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts." We cannot, however, err in remarking,

—That they were the accomplishment of his word. He had said, "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me."—Now though these declarations extend to his final coming to judgment, and his advent in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; yet they more immediately insure his manifestation of himself between his resurrection and his glory. And if the disciples understood it not at the time, the meaning would be explained by the verification. And they

would see how well they might in every other case rely upon his promise.

— They were also to convince them how fully he had forgiven them, and thus gain the confidence of their hearts. For they had behaved very unworthily. After all he had done for them, and their own professions of attachment, when the hour of trial came, they all forsook him and fled. How much he felt their defection, we learn from his complaint, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforter, and I found none." And their own consciences upbraided and condemned them for their vileness. And therefore had he gone away to heaven, and they had not seen him, they would have feared his resentment and displeasure—but he appeared to them again and again; and always with kindness in his looks, and peace on his lips; and at last, laying his hands on them, he was taken up to heaven in the very act of blessing them—thus telling them that he had the same heart as ever, and was more than pacified towards them after all that they had done.

— They were also to evince the certainty of his resurrection. The importance of this event rendered it necessary that it should be placed beyond the possibility of all reasonable doubt. The disciples were not eagerly credulous of the fact, but slow of heart to believe; and their diffidence has been overruled to confirm our faith. For they required and obtained every kind and degree of proof. And these deponents were many. And were eye and ear witnesses. And even handled the Word of Life. And did eat and drink with him. And for a length of time. And in cases of a most peculiar nature. *They* could not, therefore, be mistaken; and *we* cannot be deceived. He is risen indeed! and therefore he is the Son of God; and we are not in our sins; and the dead in Christ are not perished; and because he lives we shall live also.

— They were also to impart information on subjects not touched, or only hinted at, before; because the disciples were not able to bear them; and the proper hour was not yet come. And therefore the sacred historian says, that he not only shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, but also *spake* to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And this led them to think so differently of this kingdom from what they had done before, and to wait by prayer for its coming, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But when he said, I am no more in this world; and, also, Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world: and when he said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"—surely he intended a manifestation beyond his appearance, between his grave and his glory. And this we ourselves may hope to claim. But how is it that he will manifest himself unto us, and not unto the world? We disclaim all pretensions to personal manifestations. Some have contended for these; and, like Colonel Gardiner, have believed that they corporeally saw him. But surely this was mistaking a lively impression on the mind for a reality. The case speaks for itself. Being embodied, he *could* render himself visible; but then it would be a true representation; we should see him as he *is*. And, accordingly, Saul saw him, when he appeared to him in his way to Damascus, with a body glorious above the brightness of the sun. But these good people always see him as he is not—they always see him bleeding on the cross—but he is not there—he dieth no more, death hath no more domnion over him. We need no sensible appearance.

— But there is a spiritual manifestation absolutely necessary. Paul experienced this, or the outward

vision would have been of little avail: "It pleased God," says he, "to reveal his Son in me." And our Saviour himself said, He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life. It is a perception, by faith, of his glory, so as to induce us to love him, and trust in him, and follow him.

— There are also special manifestations of himself (we mean as to clearness and enjoyment) occasionally experienced by his people; and which excite them to exclaim, "This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven." These are not their food, but cordials. They are regulated by their condition and exigencies. But though they are limited, as to number and degree, they are most desirable and valuable. They make us better acquainted with heaven, than all the descriptions in the world. And they make us long after a state—in which his servants shall serve Him; and they shall see his face—"And so shall they be for ever with the Lord."

JULY 30.—"*This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.*" John xxi. 14.

— NOT the third time in succession—for he had appeared before this to the women, and to Cephas, and to James, and to the two disciples going to Emmaus. But the third time in kind; *i.e.*, the third time when the disciples were together.

— "And on this wise shewed he himself." The *place* was, "the sea of Tiberias"—called, also, the lake of Gennesaret, and the lake of Galilee. We should like to visit this sea, whose surface and whose shores so often felt the presence, and witnessed the miracles, of the Son of God.

—The favoured *party*, were, "Simon Peter, and Thomas, called Didymus"—he had lost much by his absence before, but now he keeps close to his brethren—"and Nathanael, of Cana in Galilee"—we thought well of him from the beginning; for though at first he had some infirmities, he was open to conviction, and loved retirement; and he who saw him under the fig-tree, assured him that he should see greater things than these—"and the sons of Zebedee"—John and James—"and two other of his disciples"—who are not named. But it may be asked, How came the disciples here, seeing when he rose from the dead they were (unless, perhaps, Nathanael) at Jerusalem? The Saviour had said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall be scattered every one to his own;" and it is said, "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home"—This was the effect of fear. But though fear made them flee, yet their repairing down into *Galilee* was enjoined them by the angel, who appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. And Jesus himself had said, before his death, "After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." They believed his word, and obeyed; and he was faithful that had promised.

—But how did he find them *engaged?* "Simon Peter," who had a house of his own, and perhaps had retained the implements of his business, "saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee." This was not, as some imagine, blameable; as if they ought to have remained fasting and praying; or as if this exertion was the effect of their despondency, with regard to his appearance, and his care to provide for them. We are persuaded they acted commendably. It shewed their humility—that, though advanced, they were not elated, nor ashamed of their former engagement; and their wish—not to be burdensome to any, if they could supply their own wants, and with quiet-

ness work, and eat their own bread; and also their diligence—in redeeming their time, and not waiting for him in idleness. And he appeared to them, though not engaged in a religious exercise, but in a secular, honest calling; as the angels had appeared to the shepherds, when keeping their flocks by night. And if he came to any of us, by death, how much better would it be for him to find us active, in fulfilling the duties of a useful station, than telling our beads, or kneeling before a skull, or a crucifixion, in a cell! When Elijah was consciously waiting for the chariot, that was to carry him to heaven, what did he? Retire, to fast and pray? No; but he continued talking with his pupil and successor, for his improvement—determined to be useful to the last, and to live, as long as he breathed—And blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

—But "that night they caught nothing." Though, in an ordinary way, the hand of the diligent maketh fat, yet this rule has its exceptions; and these should be sufficient to teach us, that the blessing of the Lord, *it* maketh rich; and that, except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it—The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Men, and even good men, may for a while be baffled in their efforts—to teach them the lesson of dependence upon Providence; and to keep them, when success cometh, from sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own drag, as if, by these, their portion had been made plenteous.

— He loves to astonish, as well as relieve, his people: he therefore often delays his appearance, till our hopelessness has prepared us for the display of his glory to the greatest advantage. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning—"When the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore." But they knew not

that it was Jesus—supposing him to be some common person, waiting their coming a-shore, to purchase what they had caught. And this was the meaning of the question, "Children, have ye any meat?"—*i.e.*, Have you succeeded in fishing? And have you any provision to dispose of?—Upon their answering, No; he shewed his omniscience. He saw where a shoal was approaching the boat, and ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship—assuring them, that they should find. They did so—and who ever lost by obeying him? So signal was their success, that they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes!

— Thus good men sometimes see their affairs, after many a fruitless struggle, taking a favourable turn, and every thing succeeding beyond their expection. At evening tide it shall be light. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."—We shall look at this narrative again.

JULY 31.—"*And on this wise shewed he himself.*" John xxi. 1.

— WE have traced this appearance down to the moment when the disciples ascertained who he was, John recognized him first; reminded, as it would appear, by a former miracle of the same kind; and on the performance of which, Peter had exclaimed, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Yet Peter was not at present struck with the recollection himself. But no sooner does John say to him, "It is the Lord," than the ship can hold him no longer; but girding himself with his fisher's coat, he plunges into the sea to reach him! What rash-

ness! What zeal! How perfectly in character does this man always appear! He was fervent, but acted by feeling, rather than reflection. He had a warm heart. The Lord had lately turned and looked upon him in the Judgment Hall, and he went out and wept bitterly. He had had much forgiven; and he loved much. The Saviour had more than pardoned his late sad conduct; and had sent a message to him distinctively, "Go, tell my disciples, and Peter!" And how could he love Him enough? And love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it.

— The rest of the disciples followed slowly, but surely, dragging the net. Had all done like Peter, the fish had been abandoned, and the vessel left to be drifted and injured. While we admire some, we must not condemn others. The dispositions and the duties of men are various: and while some perform splendid actions, and excite notice, others go ploddingly on in the sober discharge of their common calling—But they also have the testimony that they please God.

— What did they find when they came to land? "A fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread." This was to show that he cared for them; that they should be furnished, not only with grace sufficient for them, but with food convenient for them; and that verily they should be fed. He had reminded them of this on a former occasion. When he sent them forth on their missionary excursion unprovided, they had misgivings how they were to be supplied—though they were ashamed to make known their fears: but he who employed them was bound to maintain them—and when they returned, he said, "When I sent you forth without purse and scrip, lacked ye any thing?" And they said, Nothing. "O fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him! The young lions may lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord

shall not want any good thing." You serve a kind Master, and the world is his, and the fulness thereof—Jehovah-jireh!—But we read, "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hand;" and nothing has such a peculiar relish as what is gained by the blessing of God upon our own endeavours. He therefore also said unto them, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." And thus, while they must have marvelled and adored at what was nothing less than a miracle, they were not only supplied for their immediate use; but the sale of the capture would pay their expenses back to Jerusalem, and while waiting there, for the promise of the Father.

— Filled with reverence and awe, they seemed reserved, and disposed to keep back—He therefore invited them—"*Come* and dine. And none of his disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." But still keeping back: "Jesus then *cometh*" to them, "and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." The meat was ordinary, and coarsely dressed; but it was wholesome; and the appetite of labour made it welcome. We do not live to eat, but eat to live. Nature wants little; and grace, less. Luther often dined upon a herring; and Junius, on an egg. If it be, as is said, beneath a philosopher to be nice and finical in his food, how much more is it so in a Christian! in a minister! Jesus censured Martha; and commended Mary. The table—*He* spreads for us is frugal and simple—It is the world, the flesh, the devil, disease, and death, bring in the rest. No mention is made of his blessing the repast; but there is no doubt but he did—It was his constant usage—to teach us to be religious in our common actions; and that man liveth, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

But did he actually partake of the provision

himself?—What says Peter? "He shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink *with him* after he rose from the dead." Did he rise with the same body that died? "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet, and see that it is I myself. Handle me and see: a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Did his body undergo any change before his ascension? Will things in a future state be possible that are not necessary? We know but in part. And the sacred writers prophesy but in part.

— But "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."—Let me be one of the number to whom he shall say—"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

AUGUST 1.—"*So when they had dined*"—.
John xxi. 18.

—THEY did not, we presume, continue long at table. Table, indeed, they had none. The place was the sea-side. The viands, bread and fish. The fare, dressed and served, coarsely. Yet part of it was miraculously provided before they landed; and part of it supplied from the wonderful capture they had just made—Here were seven Apostles—and the Lord of angels. Who, then, would not have been at the homely meal? Who, having any piety, or any wisdom, would not have preferred the entertainment—thus dignified—however humble—to the sumptuous feast of Belshazzar, or Ahasuerus? Where there is much provision for the flesh, there is little repast

for the mind. And this is commonly found *after* the meal. It has often been lamented, that the best part of society should be expected to withdraw, as soon as dinner is ended: but females may be assured, that, with few exceptions, they sustain no loss by their removal.

— But here, when they had dined, discourse followed, which has been deemed worthy the page of inspiration; and was written for our learning and admonition. It commenced with an enquiry. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again, the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

The question was put to Peter, because of his late conduct. Instead, therefore, of shewing any pre-eminence in him, it implied his fall, and tended to his humiliation. This, and this alone, was the reason why our Lord thus freely, yet tenderly, addressed *him* in the presence of his brethren—It was necessary both for *his* sake and for *their* sakes.

The question was first put comparatively—Lovest thou me *more than these?* There is something ambiguous and equivocal in the expression. Did our Lord, by *these*, refer to the fish, the nets, the boat, his present occupation and profit? Doddridge says this is a forced and frigid sense. But this does not appear. By this calling, Peter had gained his subsistence—he might naturally be attached to it—and feel a degree of reluctance at leaving it, without

any other means of support in view—and, as our Lord would be freely served, he enquires whether Peter was willing to resign all—and go a-fishing no more—and be wholly engaged in his service.—Or did he point to the rest of the disciples, when he said, Lovest thou me more than *these?*—*i. e.*, more than these thy brethren love me? To this, Whitby objects; because it would be impossible for Peter to answer such an enquiry; as he could not know the hearts of others, and compare them with his own. But the question refers not to Peter's *knowledge*, but to his *opinion*. He had already expressed a degree of self-preference, as well as self-confidence, when he said, "Though all should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"—and he had now *done* more than the other disciples, in swimming to shore, to reach him first—"Am I, then," says Jesus, "to suppose that thou lovest me more than *these?*" Peter's reply shews his improvement—"I have done with judging others—and I say nothing of the *degree* of my love—but thou knowest the *reality*."

— It was *thrice* renewed. Thrice is used as a kind of perfect number. In Peter's Vision, the thing was done thrice, to render it the more observable. There is little doubt, however, that our Saviour alluded to the repetition of his offence—and the forewarning he had received—"Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me *thrice*."

— Peter, when asked the question the third time, was *grieved*—This grief was not anger at the Saviour's conduct; but pain, to think that he had rendered his love to so dear a Master suspicious; and fear, also—as he knew he never spoke in vain—that there was a cause for this additional enquiry, and that it intimated an apprehension of some fresh peril. This sensibility shewed a good frame of mind.

— To *all* the enquiries he replies, without a moment's hesitation, and addresses himself, in *each*

, to the Saviour's own knowledge, with an al force in the last appeal—"Lord, thou ; all things; thou knowest that I love thee— ; say, I shall never yield to temptation again— reserve me!—And I wonder not that those ı only judge from outward appearance, think rably of me, after all that I have done. But est the heart." We ought to stand clear en; but it is a peculiar satisfaction, when we judged of our fellow-creatures, to know that ness is in heaven, and our record is on high. fter every answer, our Lord commands him his lambs, and his sheep. Here, again, a te cause wants to find a proof of Peter's acy. But he is not told to lord it over all er *shepherds*, but to do the work of a *pastor* —the very same thing which Peter, too, en- on others—"Feed the flock of God that is you." Yea, instead of his being exalted is brethren, he is again reproved and abased. ad not forfeited their charge; but he had; was necessary to renew it. And, therefore, is re-converted, he is re-commissioned. If nt had offended, and forfeited his place, it ot be enough for the master to say, I forgive t I can no more trust thee, or employ thee— would be deemed a full restoration, but re- nent.

things may be observed here. First, the e there is among the Lord's people. There ; only sheep, but lambs—These mean, new , and weak believers. These are not to be ded. *He* does not despise the day of small -and he tells those who are strong, to bear mities of the weak.—Secondly, we see what d requires, as the principle of his service— ı love me, Peter, feed my lambs, feed my I wish you to do nothing for me, unless you om love—This alone will render your work

your delight; and carry you through all its difficulties —Love is strong as death." And while he requires the love, as the principle of the service; he requires the service, as the proof of the love. "You cannot shew your love to me personally; shew it relatively. I have a cause—endeavour to promote it. I have followers—aid them—and inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye shall do it unto me."

Ah! this love, O my soul, is the grand thing! Without it, whatever be my religious pretensions, I am nothing. Let me put my name in the place of Peter's; and suppose the Lord Jesus asking me this question—Dost *thou* love me?

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
"That my love is weak and faint;
"Yet I love Thee, and adore;
"O for grace, to love Thee more!"

AUG. 2.—"*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*" John xxi. 18, 19.

— THIS was another part of his discourse, "when they had dined." He had enjoined Peter his doing work, and now he appoints him his suffering work. In such a world as this, doing well and bearing ill are commonly connnected—In the first days of Christianity they were inseparable.

The representation may be applid to the difference there is between youth and age. The glory

of young men is their strength. They can gird themselves; and go with ease, and speed whither they would. And let them use well their powers and opportunities. Let them be active and useful, and prepared for the future. Other days will come; and when they shall be old, they shall stretch forth their hands, and another shall gird them, and carry them whither they would not—They will be helpless and dependent. People long for age—but what is it but longing for days in which we have no pleasure; when we shall be dim-sighted; and hard of hearing; and tremblings will come upon us; and the grasshopper will be a burden; and desire fail! These are the effects of the state—if by reason of strength our years are threescore and ten, yet is their strength labour and sorrow. Let us secure succour against such a period. It is said, an old man has no friend but his money. But if we are kind, and live not to ourselves, we shall not want those who will rock the cradle of our age. And, above all, God will be our comfort and strength; and bear and carry us; and gently take us to himself; where our youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and mortality swallowed up of life.

But our Lord we are assured designed to intimate, that after Peter had served him as an Apostle, he was to honour him as a martyr—"signifying by what death he should glorify God." Thus,

First. Our Lord foresaw Peter's sufferings, and the manner in which he was to finish his course—And he foresees all that shall befall each of us. We know not what a day may bring forth. But nothing is left to chance. No event will turn up that is new to him; and for which he has not provided.

Secondly. Peter was not to die till he should be old. Very good and useful men have been removed in the midst of life—and this is one of the most mysterious dispensations of Providence. But this is not always the case. Religion conduces to

health and longevity. Many of God's most eminent servants have "filled their days," and come to the grave in a good old age, like a shock of corn fully ripe, in its season. And the hoary head is a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness. Such a man is not only a kind of physical wonder—that he should have been preserved so long with such a feeble frame, and exposed to so many outward dangers: but a moral wonder—that with such a heart, and in such a world, he should have held on his way, and kept his garments clean, and been without offence. He is a monument to the glory of divine grace.

Thirdly. He was to die by crucifixion. This is the meaning of his "stretching forth his hands, and being girded and carried whither he would not"—*i.e.* his arms would be extended on a cross, and he would be bound, to be led to a death of violence, not agreeable to his feelings, and at which nature would revolt. For religion does not divest us of humanity; an aversion to pain is not inconsistent with submission to the will of God; we may love the result of death, and shudder at the passage. Paul wished not to be unclothed, but clothed upon: and Jesus himself, with strong cryings and tears, said, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Peter would, and would not; there was nature in him, as well as grace. And while the spirit would be willing, the flesh would be weak. We see this related of some of the martyrs. Latimer, in one of his Letters in Prison, says to his friend—"Oh! pray for me! I sometimes shudder, and could creep into a mouse-hole; and then the Lord visits me again with his comforts; and thus, by his coming and going, shews me my infirmity." Ridley, at the stake, said to the smith, that was driving in the staple, "Knock it in hard, my good fellow; for the flesh may have its freaks." And when they were leading Rawlins along to the flames, chancing to see his wife and chil-

dren among the crowd, he burst into a flood of tears; and, striking his breast, he exclaimed, "Ah! flesh, you would have your way; but I tell thee, by the grace of God, thou shalt not gain the victory."

Lastly. His death was to issue in the Divine glory. Persecution has always been overruled to advance the cause it aimed to destroy. The wrath of man has praised God. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the churches. The death of such men has been honourable to the truth and grace of the Gospel. It has awakened attention, and induced inquiry; and, by displaying the temper and supports of the sufferers, such impressions have been made upon the spectators, that, before the ashes were extinguished, others were ready to be baptised for the dead.

We are not martyrs. But we are often called to suffer; and we may glorify God in the fires. There is only one way into the world; but there are many ways out. By which of these we are to pass, we know not. But we may glorify God by the death we shall die—if we are enabled to exercise faith, patience, and repentance; if the joy of the Lord is our strength; and we can, from experience, recommend his service.

For this, we should be concerned. And, but for this, we presume many would desire to die "softly, suddenly, and alone"—Yet what they should choose, they wot not. They, therefore, leave all with their Heavenly Father—only praying, that Christ may be magnified in their body, whether it be by life or by death.

AUG. 3.—"*And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which*

also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

John xxi. 19—22.

—THIS is another part of the discourse when they had dined. It is the reproof of Peter, who, though recovered from his fall, and re-commissioned to his office, was not faultless—Who can understand his errors?

—The case was this. As soon as our Lord had tried Peter's love, and predicted his death, he said unto him, "Follow me." This is to be taken literally: for though it might be intended as a symbol, yet he now arose from his seat, and, walking away from the company, he told Peter to come after him—probably wishing to have some communication with him apart. Peter obeyed. But John, seeing this, and fearing that our Lord was departing, and would take Peter along with him, could not remain where he was—and so he followed them—silent and anxious, and, perhaps, weeping. Peter, turning round, sees him; and asks, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" It is probable this arose partly from an affectionate concern for his companion; and, considering the peculiar friendship there was between them, we might have considered the question as excusable, if not even laudable.

But we are sure it was wrong in the motive. Peter, instead of being satisfied with a knowledge of his own duty and destiny, and praying to be able to perform the one, and endure the other; wishes to pry into John's future circumstances—to know what was to become of him; whether he also should suffer; and what death he should die. This, in the view of him who reproved not according to the hearing of the ear, involved in it an improper curiosity—a principle,

when indulged, always the most unprofitable in itself, and often the most rude in its exercise, and injurious in its effects. Our Lord always discouraged it; and therefore he here rebukes Peter in these memorable words—"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me"—as I have commanded thee.—How many things engage our time and attention, which do not concern us! How often do we turn from what is plain and important; and perplex or amuse ourselves with what is too distant for us to reach; too deep for us to fathom; too complicated for us to unravel; or too trifling to merit regard! When poring over the future state of the Heathen, and the destiny of idiots, and the decrees of God, and the union of fore-knowledge and free-agency, and the fulfilment of Prophecy; is not the Saviour asking, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me"? "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law."

Our present knowledge is proportioned to our present state. More information upon certain subjects would now injure, rather than improve, by multiplying our diversions, and drawing us more off from the one thing needful. We are now in a state of action and preparation. Let us leave the knowledge that is too wonderful for us. A day-labourer will gain more of it in a moment after he enters heaven, than any philosopher or divine can acquire by the toil of a whole life. Let us wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore—Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

But what have we to *do?* FOLLOW THOU ME. Lord, help me to follow thee, as thy disciple and thy servant—immediately, without delay—freely, without constraint—fully, without reserve—and constantly, without change, or—a shadow of turning!

AUG. 4.—*"Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"*
John xxi. 23.

WHAT did he mean by his coming to John? It may be understood three ways.

— Of his coming by a natural death; and he was the only apostle who did not suffer a violent end.

— Of his coming to destroy Jerusalem; and he survived that event.

— Of his coming at the last day; in which case he answers Peter, by the supposition of a miracle—"What if I choose that he should continue on earth till I come to judge the world?" In this sense it was taken.

But observe how it was mis-reported. Jesus only supposed a case; and it was turned into an assertion. He only said, What *if* I will that he tarry till I come; and it was circulated that he *should* so tarry—and the saying went abroad among the brethren that he should not die. Who has not heard the absurd story of the wandering Jew? Whether any now believe such a delusion, we know not: but we see what influence the notion had in the early ages. Beza mentions an impostor in his time, at Paris, who gave out that he was the deathless John, and was burnt at Toulouse.

— But see how ready people are to credit things strange and wonderful—O that they were equally ready to receive the witness of God!

How many mistakes have arisen from deviating by little and little from the language of Revelation.—Many errors might be prevented, and many ratified, if we could bring the parties to the *very* words the Holy Ghost useth.—Let us distinguish between Divine truth, and men's explanations of it. Let us

not take up with the statements of Calvin, or Arminius, or any other reporter, while we can go to the Scripture itself. "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

But let us make a moral use of this misrepresentation, and learn the importance of accuracy in our statements. It is owing to the neglect of this that there is so much *circumstantial falsehood:* we refer to the relations of facts, true in substance, but false in circumstances. Some seldom ever apprehend things distinctly; and how can they report them accurately? Some have memories that rarely retain perfectly what they hear. Some are careless; and mind not morally what they say. Some are full of eagerness and feeling: and love to excite—and for this purpose they love to enlarge and enhance. From one cause or another, many, who would skrink back from a direct lie, occasion deception by those omissions or additions which can give an erroneous turn or effect to the case spoken of. By this means, what aid is given to slander, and what injury is often done to character, where there is no risk on the one side, and no redress on the other!

Look at the text, and see what consequences may result from the substitution of a *shall*, for an *if:* and always make conscience of your speech. Distinguish things that differ. What you know as probable, state as probable; and state as certain, only what you know to be certain. As a good remedy for this, and every other evil of the tongue—Let us be swift to hear, but slow to speak—Let us remember, that in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin—Let us believe, that by our words we are to be justified or condemned—Let us keep our hearts with all diligence; for out of them are the issues of life—and let us pray—Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips.

AUG. 5.—"*Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe.*" Joel iii. 13.

THE season renders the language interesting; and we may consider the words, literally, as an address to husbandmen.

The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. He casts the seed into the ground, where it seems lost. For a while, he sees nothing to reward his labour and expense: for that which he soweth is not quickened except it die. But it soon rises from the dead: and he perceives the blade, gently rising through the earth. Then comes winter. The wind howls over it; the frost bends and binds it; the snow covers and oppresses it—But it weathers all. The spring arrives. The stalk shoots up; and the ear appears, and the full corn in the ear. The crop ripens; and the golden harvest waves its treasures; and calls for the reaper to fill his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom. The husbandman may think little or nothing of God—unless he wants fine weather; but it is *He* that worketh all in all: and whatever interventions there may be, *He* is the first cause: "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

And herein we see the power of God. The spectators wondered when five loaves were multiplied into a sufficiency for more than five thousand consumers. Why are not we struck, when we see the grain in the earth annually increasing thirty, sixty, an hundred fold? It is the commonness of the effect that prevents our astonishment. The only difference in the cases is, that in one instance the operation is sudden;

in the other, it is slow: but this magnifies the agency, instead of detracting from it.

— And here we see the truth of God. When Noah and his family left the Ark, and saw the new world, every appearance of cloud awakened their fears; and God, to tranquillize them, said, "I will not again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." And every time the sickle is put in, he tells us that he is a faithful God, and that we may always rely upon his word.

— Here we behold his goodness. For whom does he thus constantly and plenteously provide; but an unworthy, guilty, ungrateful world; who will overlook his kindness, and abuse his benefits, and turn his gifts into weapons of rebellion against him! Were he to deal with them after their desert, or reward them according to their iniquities, the heavens over us would be brass, and the earth iron; the grain would perish in wetness, or be burnt up with drought; and we should have cleanness of teeth in all our dwellings; and while the children cried for bread, the mother would have none to give them.

— Here we also trace the wisdom of God. For though all things are of God, he does not encourage sloth. Our activity is as necessary as our dependence. Though there is a part we cannot do, there is a part we can do—and if this be neglected, God will do nothing. We cannot furnish the soil; but we must manure it. We cannot produce the seed; but we must sow it. We cannot ripen the field; but we must reap it. "What thou givest them, that they gather."

Let us be thankful that another of these pleasing and instructive periods has arrived. And while we see the valleys standing thick with corn, and hear the little hills rejoicing on every side; let us pray for the appointed weeks of harvest.

— And, remembering another, and an infinitely more important opportunity, may we give all diligence, while it continues, to secure its blessings; lest, in the anguish of disappointment, and the remorse of despair, we are forced to exclaim; "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not SAVED." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"—Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe.

AUG. 6.—"*Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe.*" Joel iii. 13.

WE have taken these words literally; let us now view them metaphorically. We have heard them addressed to the husbandman; let us now consider them as addressed—To spiritual instructors—To public judgments—To the messengers of death—To the angels of God at the last day—Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe.

First, as addressed by God to the ministers of his Word. That we are allowed such an application, is obvious. Our Lord said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." By harvest, he intends means of usefulness and opportunities: and by labourers, those whose office it is to endeavour to make use of them. So again: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Here he refers to the season of doing good to the Samaritans, which he was now improving; for, in consequence of the testimony of the woman, many of them were eager to hear, and were coming over the plain. The case is, when the grain is ripe, if it be not gathered in, it is liable to perish. The

eason for saving it is short and uncertain. Men, herefore, forego care, and endure fatigue to secure . But what is the safety of the grain, to the sal-ation of souls! How many are destroying, for lack f knowledge! But the period is favourable for nforming them. We have religious freedom; and ur exertions are unimpeded. None makes us afraid. Ve have the Scriptures in full circulation. The ising generation are taught to read. Religious arties excite and emulate each other. Prejudices re wearing away. Persons are willing to hear. nd not preachers only, but parents, masters, neigh-ours, Christians at large—all, in doing good, have he finest opportunities, if they will seize them; and he loudest calls, if they will obey them—But the pace for all this, will not, cannot continue—There-ore, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with hy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor nowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou oest."

Secondly, as addressed to public judgments. hus we are principally to understand the passage efore us. The people spoken of, were ripe for ruin —God therefore calls for the executioners of his rath to cut them down. Thus it was with the eople of Canaan, when their iniquity was full; and oshua and his army were the reapers. Thus it was ith the Jews themselves: and Nebuchadnezzar was alled in to punish them; and afterwards the Romans, o destroy them. Thus it has been with many nations ince. And thus it has been with many a community, ven in our own times. The work was soon done; or the reapers were the Lord's; and the fields were ully ripe.—Are we in danger? We have reason for pprehension, if we estimate our condition by our uilt, and our guilt by our privileges. Let us not e high-minded, but fear. God can never be at a ss for instruments. He can mingle a perverse spirit n the midst of us. He can take wisdom from the

prudent, and courage from the brave. Hearts, events, elements, are all his. He has a controversy with us; and, by menacing dispensations, seems to say aloud, Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? But these threatenings are mercifully conditional. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." May we hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord—and he will leave a blessing behind him, that we perish not.

Thirdly, as addressed to the messengers of death —accidents, diseases, whatever can bring us to the grave. This regards us individually. Whatever be the destiny of the nations, we know our own destiny: old or young, rich or poor, it is appointed unto us once to die—This is the way of all the earth.—But when are people ripe for this removal hence?

It is certain that sin ripens the transgressor for hell. But *when* he is ripe, it is not easy to decide. The most grossly and openly vicious are not always the most guilty before God. We see a profligate wretch, and deem him ripe for ruin; and wonder *he* is not cut down—when, perhaps, though not immoral, we ourselves are much more criminal in the sight of Him, who judgeth righteously. He, perhaps, never had our advantages; and was pressed by severer temptations than we ever knew. If asked, therefore, *when* a man is ripe for destruction, we acknowledge we cannot determine. But it must be wise to beware; and to keep from every approximation to such a dreadful state. Surely when a man is insensible under the Word; and incorrigible under the rebukes of Providence; and his conscience ceases to reprove; and he can turn Divine things into ridicule; he must be, as the Apostle says, "nigh unto cursing."

—Holiness ripens the saint for glory. But here,

again, when he is matured and made meet for it, we cannot ascertain. Actions strike us: but some have few opportunities for exertion; and yet they have much of the life of God in their souls. We should think favourably of a man, in proportion as he was dissatisfied with himself; and esteemed the Lord Jesus; and relied upon him; and was anxious to resemble him; and acknowledged God in all his ways. However, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and them that are not his; and he chooses the most proper time to remove them—the wheat for the barn, and the chaff for the burning. But the end of all things is at hand. And,

Fourthly, God thus addresses his angels at the last day. When this mandate will be given, is uncertain. But we are as sure of the event, as we are ignorant of the period. And then shall the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Then cometh the end. Then all will be ripe. His purposes will be accomplished. His promises and threatenings will be verified—Time itself will be no longer—The earth will be cleared of all the produce; and the very fields in which it grew will be destroyed. "The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"—

Let him hear *this*. How many things are continually said! And how are we to judge of them? One says, this is excellent; another, this is all-important.

But if you would know what is the *real* value of these things, bring them to the *standard*—bring them to the *great day!* How do they abide *this* trial?

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." If you say, "All this is far off; and many things must be previously accomplished;" remember you cannot say this of death—There is but a step between you and death. How soon, therefore, may all the prophecies be fulfilled, and the world be at end, with you! And as death leaves you, judgment will find you. Many who once heard the warnings, are now in possession of the facts. Could we ask them—now they have entered the eternal world by death; and are waiting for the judgment to come—Is there one of them that would not bear his testimony to the importance of every Sabbath, and every sermon, with which you are favoured? Is there one of them that would say, "While I was living, the preacher was too close, and too alarming?" Rather would he not say, "Why was he not more in earnest?—And oh! wretch that I was, to disregard his voice—and come into this place of torment!"

AUG. 7.—"*For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.*" 1 Cor. iv. 20.

LET us not abuse, but improve the important decision.—It may be abused in two instanees:

First. When it leads us to undervalue the outward institutions of piety, and the ordinary means of grace. Some would so refine religion as to make it unsuited to human beings. We have bodies as well as souls, and we are required to glorify God

in the one as well as in the other. Our devotion is indeed nothing unless we "lift up our hearts with our hands:" but bodily exercise need not be excluded in order to our worshipping in Spirit and in truth.—There may be the form of godliness without the power: but while we are here, the power cannot be displayed or maintained without the form. Enthusiasts may tell us, they never had so much religion as since they have given up, what are called, its ordinances; for now every day is a Sabbath, and every place a temple, and every voice a preacher. But they are not to be believed. Even all the private and practical duties of life are most fully and regularly discharged by those who wait upon God in his appointments. It is a dangerous delusion that leads people to the neglect of those means of grace which God, who knoweth our frame, has enjoined us to use; and to the use of which he hath promised his blessing.—In the New Jerusalem John saw "no temple there:" but the experience of every Christian leads him, while he is here, to love the habitation of God's house, and to acknowledge that it is good for him to be there. The streams that will be needless when we reach the fountain-head, are valuable in the way. Our present aliments will be unnecessary hereafter; but what pretender would be so ethereal as to dispense with them now?

Secondly. When we are heedless of regulating the energy of our religion by the rule of the word. It is desirable to enlist the feelings on the side of truth and excellence. Impulse is useful and even necessary to exertion and success; but, in proportion to its force, it requires guidance, if not restraint. It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing; but without knowledge, zeal may even in a good cause carry us astray; so that our good may be evil spoken of, and even produce evil. Something must be allowed for persons wanting in judgment; and for young converts, especially if they have been

suddenly awakened. The novelty and the vividness of their views and impressions of eternal things may occasion some mistakes and improprieties in harmonizing religion properly with secular and relative life. But what we excuse, we are not to commend. If one duty defrauds or kills another, it is a robber or a murderer. The wise man tells us every thing is beautiful in its season; and Paul enjoins us to do every thing decently and in order. But, under the sanction of such a supposed authority as our text, we have known religious servants who have risen above their masters, and lectured and reproved them—We have known men who have left their callings, and rushed into offices for which they were not designed—We have known females, who, instead of being keepers at home, have neglected their husbands and children to gad about after favourite preachers—We have known orthodox professors, who have broken out into every kind of rudeness and rancour, under a notion of being faithful and valiant for the Truth. Disputants have contended earnestly for the faith, with pens dipped in gall and tongues set on fire of hell—Persecutors have killed others, to do God service; and the priest, with the crucifix, has urged the dragoon not to do the work of the Lord deceitfully, or keep back his sword from shedding of blood!

The decision may be improved by applying it in two cases.—First, in judging ourselves. And here the leaning should be to the side of severity. Let us be satisfied with nothing short of the real power of religion. Whatever we depend upon, while we are strangers to this, will be more than useless—it will issue in the most dreadful disappointment. It is better to err on the side of caution than of self-security. According to our Saviour, the delusion accompanies some to the very door of heaven: they knock, with confidence that they shall be admitted; and are surprised and confounded when they

hear from within, I know you not whence ye are. Do not place your religion in attending on Divine ordinances; or in a mere belief of the truth; or in some outward reformation; or in some particular course of duty to which you may have inducements that render it easy. Search and try your ways. See whether you have given God your whole heart, and can sacrifice every bosom-lust. See whether your religion has any thing in it above the efficiency of natural principles—whether it is flesh or Spirit; whether you are under the Law, or under grace. Examine yourselves. If believers—Does your faith work by love? And do you love in word and in tongue, or in deed and in truth? If penitents—Have you said, with Ephraim, What have I any more to do with idols? If worshippers—Do you only draw nigh to Him with the mouth and honour Him with your lips, while your heart is far from him? If hearers—Has the Gospel come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?

Secondly. In judging others. And here the leaning should be to candour. We should beware how we deny this power to a fellow-professor, without just evidence. It is always a difficult thing to decide the degree of another's religion. Men differ exceedingly, even in their natural temperament. How sanguine is one! How phlegmatical is another! Some are constitutionally bold and forward; others are equally timid and retreating. Is it to be supposed, that all these will shew their piety precisely in the same manner? We often ascribe to a religious ardour, what is the effect of a liveliness and volubility of temper. Hence, when we meet with an individual who is always speaking on religious topics, we are apt to consider him a zealous soul; and to suppose that all this talkativeness results from pious principle. Whereas, it is more than probable, if we followed him through life, we should find him as

eager on secular occasions as on religion. On the other hand, when we meet with a man who shrinks from notice, and is backward to speak of Divine things, and especially of his own experience; we frequently set him down, as one who is not fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord. But may not this man be very much the same in all other cases? And if so, should we not do him injustice, by judging of his state in religion by the slowness of his speech, and the hesitation of his temper, and the tardiness of his conduct, which constitute a caret in his whole life? Judge not after the outward appearance; but judge righteous judgment.

Again. If you have reason to conclude, that a fellow Christian has this Divine reality; let it satisfy you. Love and esteem him, though he differs from your opinions; and walks not with you in the outward order of the Gospel. What is the chaff to the wheat? I love those Scriptures which inspire us with a zeal, not to make proselytes to a party, but converts to the Saviour—which tend to unite the truly pious to each other, and embattle them against the common foe—which diminish those inferior things that bigots are always magnifying; and attach supreme importance to those that infinitely deserve it—"For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

AUG. 8.—"*Lord, teach us to pray.*" Luke xi. 1.

THIS was the language of one of his disciples, as soon as he had heard *him* pray in a certain place.

He did not interrupt our Lord in the exercise; but when he had ceased, he said, wishing to resemble him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

It was well in him, not only to attach importance to prayer, and to feel his own ignorance and insufficiency in the performance; but to address one, who is always able and willing to hear and help us. None teaches like Him. Four ways he teaches to pray.

First. By his Word. A form or model—why not both?—was immediately given these disciples—"He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil"—The Scripture at large has many instructions how we are to pray. In one place we are told to pray without ceasing—In another, to come boldly to the Throne of Grace—In another, to let our words be few—In another, to ask in faith, nothing wavering—In another, to ask in the Name of Jesus—"If ye shall ask any thing in my Name, I will do it."

Secondly. By his example. Whoever lives without prayer, he did not. His example has the force of a law; and "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." As to place—he prayed in the Wilderness, and he prayed in the Garden. As to time—we read of his rising up early in the morning to pray; and praying in the evening; and continuing all night in prayer. As to observation—he prayed privately, alone, and with his disciples, and in public. As to cases—he prayed when he was baptised; and has taught us to sanctify all ordinances and duties by prayer. When going to send forth his Apostles, he prayed, to teach us to engage in no enterprize, relying on our own

wisdom and strength. When he was transfigured, he prayed, to teach us how to escape the snares of glory and greatness. With strong crying and tears he made supplication, when he was sore amazed and very heavy, to teach us, if afflicted, to pray. To teach us to love our enemies, when they pierced his hands and his feet, he prayed—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And to teach us how to finish our course, he dies, praying—"Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Thirdly. By his providence. Ah! Christians, this may explain many a dispensation that has made you tremble and grieve. "I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction, they will seek me early"—That is—I will teach them to pray. What did Absalom, when he wished for an interview with Joab, who, when sent for, refused to come? Go, said he to his servant, and set his corn on fire—and then he will soon come. And so it fell out. And, speedily and eagerly approaching him, Why hast thou done this? says Joab. Absalom replies—Not because I designed to injure thee; but I wanted to converse with thee; and my messengers were refused. So, when you are lifeless in prayer, and backward in the exercise, and disregard the invitation, "Seek ye my face;" some fiery trial consumes or threatens some of your possessions or comforts; and, alarmed and perplexed, then you anxiously say unto God, "Do not condemn me: shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me." You then also want succour and consolation; and therefore pray, "Let thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." How many of the prayers of God's people in the Scripture were, both in their reality and excellency too, the offspring of those measures by which the Lord not only chastened, but taught them.

Fourthly. By his Spirit. What means "praying

in the Holy Ghost," but praying by his influence? Why is he called "the Spirit of grace and of supplication"? Is it not because he brings us upon our knees, and keeps us instant in prayer? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: and this Spirit awakens the conscience, and makes us sensible of our needy and perishing condition: and shews us the glory, as well as the absolute importance of Divine blessings; and causes us to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and leads us into all the truth connected with our relief; and, through the blood of the Cross, inspiring hope and confidence, enables us to cry, Abba, Father.

Nor is it only in the beginning of a devotional life that this assistance is required: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," says the Apostle: "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And where is the Christian who would not often have given over the exercise, under a sense of his imperfections and weaknesses, but for the hope of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and the promise, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This has revived him again; and, out of weakness, he has been made strong; and delighted himself in the Almighty.

Happy they who, by the great Teacher, are thus taught to pray. You may be ignorant of many things; but you know your way to the Throne of Grace. You may have little learning; but you can speak the language of Canaan. You may be unnoticed of our fellow-creatures; but your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And a life of prayer will soon be followed by an eternity of praise.

But how awful the condition of those, who never

express this desire—Lord, teach us to pray! Can the love or the fear of God dwell in you? Can you dispense with the blessings of salvation? Or do you think that God, who has said, "For all these things will I be enquired of," will deny himself? Well: *another* instructer will soon teach you to pray—a dying hour—a judgment day—but in vain! "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

Aug. 9.—"*Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness.*" Jer. xiii. 16.

— The removal of the Gospel is darkness. The Gospel will never be removed from the world; but it may be withdrawn from a particular place or people. It is the very thing denounced—"I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." And this has been done. The Jews are an eminent example. The Kingdom of God was taken from them. And when we consider the miracles, the institutions, the privileges, by which they were distinguished, and see how they were all laid waste; well may the Apostle say, Behold the severity of God—and if he spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Where now are the seven Churches in Asia? Where is the famous Church of Rome, whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world? At present, you have the inestimable benefit. Be not as the swine, who knows not the value of the pearl, and therefore tramples it under foot. What wonder, if the manna should be taken away, when you despise it as light food? The Scriptures may be continued, and the preaching of the Gospel be removed: and

thus the Word may be precious, because there is no open vision. What a blessing to see our teachers; and to hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way; walk ye in it! Faith cometh by hearing. And what, if the Lord should send a famine in the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord—and we should run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it? Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness.

— Impenitence is darkness. A man may be surrounded with food; yet he dies, if he cannot use and digest it, as much as if he were in want of the aliment. The means of grace may remain, and we become incapable of deriving benefit from them. It is an awful fact, that God punishes one sin by another, and judicially blinds those who provoke him. Because they like not to retain him in their knowledge, he gives them up to a reprobate mind. Because they receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, he sends them strong delusion to believe a lie. They are joined to idols; and he lets them alone. They delight in error; and they find it. They seek objections to the faith once delivered to the saints; and they are overcome by them. They trifle with the Gospel; and, at length, they cannot seriously regard it, or feel any impression under it: and thus is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness.

— Public calamity is darkness. Was not the Babylonish bondage darkness to the Jews; when their country, the glory of all lands, was desolated; and they carried away captives, and oppressed as slaves, and insulted as a proverb and a by-word? And would not national distress be darkness to us? Some effects of this, we have experienced: but how

inconsiderable have they yet been, compared with the sufferings of other countries, or our own deserts! And is there no danger of greater? If God has a controversy with us, it is in vain to argue—we must submit. If he is provoked and determined to punish, vain is the authority of rulers, the wisdom of statesmen, the courage of warriors. "But he has a people among us." He has—and he will take care of his own; but he can secure them, and destroy others. Or even they themselves may help forward, or even occasion the calamity—for no sins offend him like theirs; and they may be chastened of the Lord, that they may not be *condemned* with the world. When the ship sailed from Joppa, there was only one good man on board; and the storm was for *his* sake; and the sea could only be calmed by his being cast into it. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness.

— The loss of reason is darkness. And how soon may the understanding be eclipsed! How easily may the slender and mysterious basis, on which intellect rests, be destroyed! See Nebuchadnezzar, eating grass, like an ox. See the philosopher, moping in drivelling idiocy. Religion can only operate through the medium of thought: and, therefore, while you have your mental powers, employ them—lest darkness come upon you.

— The loss of health is darkness. Is it nothing to be made to possess months of vanity? or to have wearisome nights appointed us?—To be chastened, also, with pain upon our bed, and the multitude of our bones with strong pain; so that our life abhorreth bread, and our soul, dainty meat; and our bones, that were not seen, stick out? Yet, on this season, many suspend an attention to the concerns of religion. When thought is broken to pieces; and every avenue to the soul is occupied with the anguish of disease, and the anxieties of recovery; surely sufficient for that day is the evil

thereof. Use your health while you have it, lest darkness come upon you.—The same applies to age. Then desire fails; the grasshopper is a burden; light, and hearing, and memory, and judgment, decline. Remember, therefore, says Solomon, now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

— Death is darkness. Then you must give up your employments, however interesting; your possessions, however valued; your connexions, however endeared; your religious advantages, however important—and, stripped and silent, retire into the gloom of the grave. This darkness is certain. It cannot be remote. It may be close at hand. There may be but a step between me and death—"before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

— Hell is darkness—outer darkness; where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The dreadfulness of this state, it is impossible either to describe or imagine. But we know that it is possible to escape it. We also know, that the present is the only opportunity. Behold, *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

Blessed be God, for his long-suffering goodness, and his warning mercy. He might justly have spared his words, and come instantly to blows. But he speaks before he strikes: and he threatens, that he may not destroy. May the kind alarm awaken our fear; and may our fear produce flight; and may we flee for refuge to the hope set before us, even Jesus, who delivers from the wrath to come.

AUG. 10.—"*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" John iii. 30.

THIS was spoken of the Redeemer, by his forerunner John. And it is not to be considered as the language of complaint, or sullen acquiescence—as if he would say, "I dislike it; but it is unavoidable. It is my grief; and I must bear it." No. It was as agreeable to his feelings, as it was firm in his belief. And it showed a fine and a noble soul in this man. The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We love something distinguishing, and therefore exclusive. We wish to rise, even by the depression of others. It is trying, even to a good man, to withdraw, and see a successor filling his place better than himself, and, as the honours he has worn are transferred to another, to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It is not an easy thing to go down well; or for a setting star to exult in a rising sun.

But it was thus with John. He knew his rank, and approved of his place. He was the servant, not the master. The friend, not the bridegroom—The Church was not married to him. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

What does he mean by this increase? Not an increase in his temporal condition. As he had been poor, so he was to continue. Many of his professed followers seek great things to themselves: but we may judge of his estimation of them by his choice: for they were all within his reach. But though he had a kingdom, it was not of this world.—Nor is it by any kind of earthly distinction and indulgence that he has characterized Christians, or raised their hope. He has nowhere engaged to make them

rich in this world's good, but only rich in faith. He has nowhere told them that they shall be free from trouble, but only that in him they shall have peace.

The increase partly regards his personal ministry. Both John and Jesus were preachers and leaders. John's "course" was ending; but Jesus was only commencing his public work. John was going to lose his disciples; and Jesus to gain them; and to become a much more famous minister, by miracles, and clearness and grandeur of doctrine, and the permanency of his success. Indeed, we have no reason to believe that John ever preached after this. The end of his mission was answered. He was a voice; and, having made his proclamation, he was silenced. He was the morning star; and, having ushered the Sun of Righteousness in, he disappeared. He was the forerunner, to introduce the Messiah; but the Messiah was now come, and verified, and acknowledged.

But it was the same as saying, Christianity must increase. Christianity was small at first; but it was to resemble the shining light, which begins with the dawn, but becomes perfect day. Or to be like the mustard seed, which, however diminutive, grows the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Or the portion of leaven, which, hid in the meal, continues to diffuse itself till the whole be leavened. His docrine was possessed only by himself for a time. He then communicated the secret to twelve; then to seventy. His followers, after this, were not numerous; and they consisted chiefly of the common people: for it was scornfully asked, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" After various trials, the number of disciples in Jerusalem previously to the descent of the Spirit, were about one hundred and twenty. Then three thousand were added in one day—and the Lord

added to the Church daily such as should be saved. Thus mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. It soon spread beyond the bounds of Judea, and reached the ends of the Roman world—the heralds thanking God, who always caused them to triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge by them in every place. How much has his cause done since! And how is it expanding now! —But a vaster increase is yet to take place. His glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For now shall he be great to the ends of the earth. Such is the language of the Scripture; and nothing has yet taken place sufficient to fulfil it. It is therefore before us. We know that Heathenism, and Mahomedanism, and "the Man of Sin," shall be destroyed. And we know that the Jews shall look on him whom they have pierced—and if the casting them away was the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

— And there is no uncertainty here—it *must* be. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. His death insures it. He has power over all flesh to accomplish it. Let those who love him, and are labouring to advance his cause, rejoice, and be encouraged—they *cannot* fail. "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen."

AUGUST 11.—"*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.*" Phil. ii. 12.

"THAT which is unsavoury cannot be eaten without salt." And therefore, to render it palatable, we season it. When we are going to reprove a fault, or enforce a duty, we should, as much as possible, commend: for praise opens the mind, and prepares for the reception of rebuke or admonition. This wisdom the Apostle here displays. There was nothing in him like flattery; but, to introduce his most solemn charge, that they would work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, he applauds these Philippians for four things.

First. Their *obedience.* Belief, knowledge, profession, talk; every thing is vain without this. The Gospel was made known for the obedience of faith—And these Philippians had "obeyed."

Secondly. The *constancy* of their practice. Lot's wife, at the angel's command, left Sodom; but "she looked back." The Galatians "did run well; but were hindered:" "they began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh." The goodness of Ephraim and Judah was like a morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away—But these Philippians had "always" obeyed.

Thirdly. The *increase* of their diligence and zeal. They had "much more" obeyed. They not only held on their way, but waxed stronger and stronger: not only continued, but always abounded in the work of the Lord. Nothing is more desirable or pleasing than to see this progression—It is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is like the springing of the earth; first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

Fourthly. The *progress* of their improvement under disadvantages. They had much more obeyed "in his absence" than in his presence—When he was no longer with them as a witness to observe; as an example to excite; as a preacher to watch and to warn, to address and to animate. Some attend the word and worship of God from the influence of

a friend, or the authority of a father or a master. Jehoash followed the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, the high priest, who brought him up; but as soon as this eminent servant of God was dead, the young prince became an idolater, and even slew a prophet of the Lord. There are many who regard the eye of man more than the eye of God. It is well when our devotion springs from inward principle, and does not depend upon outward excitement: when we not only forsake, but abhor that which is evil; and not only follow, but cleave to that which is good. There is scarcely an individual, perhaps, that does not sometimes pray. But does he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? There are few but are afflicted, or alarmed into occasional piety. But are we the same in health, as in sickness? In the house, as in the temple? On the week, as on the Sabbath?

What an immense loss must the Philippians have sustained in Paul's absence from them! Yet they obeyed much more in his absence than in his presence. Surely this shews that when he left them, God did not leave them. It teaches us that God does not depend upon instruments, though he is pleased to make use of them. It proves that, by His own Spirit, he can make up for the want of any creature advantage. When, by persecution, the Church has been deprived of their pastors; or, by accident or disease, Christians have been destitute of the public ordinances of religion; they have seen his power and his glory *as* they have seen him in the sanctuary. The streams were gone; but the fountain was near. And where the providence of God has denied the usual means of grace, we have known the sufferers to prosper in the divine life, even more than those who have enjoyed an affluence of privileges.

"I cannot bear *thine* absence, Lord—
"My *life* expires, if *Thou* depart:
"Be thou, my heart, still near my God,
"And Thou, my God, be near my heart."

AUG. 12.—"*Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*" Ps. xxx. 4.

IT would be perfectly useless to call upon *others* to do this, in their present state—

> "None but the soul that feels His grace
> "*Can* triumph in His holiness."

Since the Fall, this attribute, which renders God so amiable in himself, and which draws forth the highest praises of heaven, makes him unlovely to an apostate creature. There is nothing the sinner thinks of with so much dislike, as a perfection that justifies all his fears, and opposes all his inclinations and pursuits. What an enemy the world naturally is to the holiness of God, may be seen in the practice of the Heathens. Among all the heroes they deified, they advanced none for those qualities which approach the most nearly to it; but frequently for passions the most remote from it; and at best, only for some physical power, valued or useful, in the concerns of this life. Esculapius was deified for his skill in curing diseases. Bacchus for the use of the grape. Vulcan for his operations in fire. Hercules for his destroying monsters; and so of the rest. But not one of them all was advanced to this honour for the virtue of holiness—as if this property was beneath their notice in the formation of a deity; or they loved a god better that had nothing to do with it.

It was upon this principle that they, who are now saints, "would" once themselves "have none of Him;" and really said unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Hence, if they loved the Sabbath, it was as a day of leisure and recreation; not as "the holy of the Lord, and honourable." Hence, they disliked his people, as renewed, because they were images of this pure original.

What a blessed evidence it is in their favour, that they can now "glory in his holy Name;" and "sing and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness!" But such is the change they have experienced, that they *do* contemplate him with pleasure as holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. It is a relief, a satisfaction to their minds, in every perplexity in nature or providence, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. They delight in the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, after the inward man. The Gospel appears to their minds glorious, because "therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This attribute now smiles upon them. They have a vast interest and hope in it. As holy, they can depend upon his truth; and are assured of the fulfilment of his word. They know that He, who has said, I will abundantly pardon; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; is a God that cannot lie.—Yes, says the Christian, since he who loves me is purity itself, and his influence is almighty, he will sprinkle clean water upon me, and *I* shall be clean. He will destroy in me the sin which he infinitely hates. He will make me a partaker of his holiness, and render me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But without this love to holiness we cannot see the kingdom of God. We are, both by Scripture and by the nature of the case, excluded for ever from his presence, which could only make us miserable? What fellowship hath light with darkness? What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

Some talk of the less amiable views of the Supreme Being—yea, of the darker side of the Deity. I wonder what side this is. The Book tells me; and—I believe it—I feel it: that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Therefore, thus saith the Lord: "Let not the wise

man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might: let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

AUG. 13.—"*And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness, for Jonathan's sake?*" 2 Sam. ix. 1.

LET me not pass by this, without remark.

— *See the low estate of Saul's house!* He had a very numerous family, sufficient to have replenished a country; and yet it was now so reduced, dispersed, concealed, or unknown, that it was necessary to enquire whether any remains of it were left. So God setteth the solitary in families. Some houses, distinguished by their wealth and nobility, fall into indigence and obscurity; while others are completely terminated, their last branch having withered in the dust. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish." "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased." Vanity of vanities! saith the Preacher—all is vanity!

— See *a fine instance of the forgiveness of injuries.* Saul had been David's sworn foe; and had pursued him to the last with remorseless malignity. Yet, while he was alive, David never took an advantage to injure him, when he had him completely in his power. And when he died, he mourned over

him; and eulogized him, far beyond his dese
And, years after, he enquires whether any of
family was left—not to cut them off, lest they sho
disturb his government—or to punish the sins of
father upon the children. Thus Athaliah arose, a
destroyed all the seed royal. Thus Abimelech wo
leave none remaining of his father's house, and sl
his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal, being threesc
and ten persons, upon one stone—And the same b
barous exterminations have been always practised
the East—But David asks if any is left, to "sh
him kindness." Let us learn from hence, not
avenge ourselves; but rather to give place u
wrath. A greater than David has said, "Love y
enemies; bless them that curse you."—And he p
fectly exemplified his own command: "When revil
he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threate
not"—but prayed, "Father, forgive them; for t
know not what they do."

We have here a *proof of real and refined af
tion*—That I may shew him kindness, "for Jonath
sake." Jonathan had been his bosom-friend;
his open and generous conduct had justly endea
him to David. We love steadiness of attachm
Thy own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake
A friend is born for adversity; and loveth at
times: and his regard will extend beyond the i
vidual, to his connexions and offspring. God him
acts upon this principle; and tells us that the child
of his servant shall continue, and that the gen
tion of the upright shall be blessed. "I have b
young," says David, "and now am old; yet hav
not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begg
bread." And shall not we act upon the same p
ciple in another case? Who remembered us in
low estate? Who, when rich, for our sakes bec
poor? and died, that we might live? He was
ceived up into glory; and is no more in the worl
But are there none left of his family who stand

need of our assistance? Let us pity and relieve them. Whatever we do unto one of the least of all these, he will esteem as done unto himself.

— It was *honourable in David not to wait to be addressed, but to endeavour to search out the object.* We are to *devise* liberal things: and not only to seize, but to seek opportunities of doing good. The most needy and deserving are generally the least clamorous; and, like the stricken deer, retire, and bleed alone. And such we must seek after.—We should not wait for the enforcement of claims, if conscience tells us they are due. Yet some, we fear, would never pay a debt, if they thought the creditor had forgotten it. But justice is the rule of our duty.

— We can go no further in our praise of David. Surely his kindness loses somewhat of its excellency in its lateness. Mephibosheth was five years old when David ascended the throne; and was now married and had a son. Thus a considerable number of years must have elapsed since God had delivered him out of all his adversity—He, therefore, (though better late than never) should have made this enquiry much earlier. What shall we say to this? We ought to make the best of every thing, especially in the conduct of great and good men. But none of them are faultless. And the Sacred Writers always shew their impartiality. They always record things just as they occurred, regardless of consequences—their only aim is truth.—It has been said, in exculpation of David, That he was so much engaged in war, and pressed with such a multiplicity of engagements! There was a truth in this; but it does not entirely excuse him. He had entered into covenant with Jonathan: and should immediately have shewn his seed "the kindness of God;" that is, the kindness which he had sworn in his presence to exercise. Let us take heed that indulgence does not harden the heart: and when we prosper, let us watch and pray, lest we

enter into temptation. The prosperity of fools destroys them; and the prosperity of wise men commonly injures them. As people rise in the world, they get bad memories. The Chief Butler did not remember Joseph, but forgat him—Lord, what is man!

In all things Jesus has the pre-eminence. He remembered us as soon as he came into his kingdom. And, though passed into the heavens, he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Aug. 14.—"*And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?*" 2 Sam. ix. 7, 8.

David had inquired whether there was any left of the house of Saul, that he might shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake. Upon which Ziba, an old retainer in Saul's family, said unto the king, "Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet." This lameness was occasioned by an accident, in consequence of the battle of Gilboa, by which his grandfather and his father were both slain. The nurse, not only from the terror such an event naturally inspires, but also from knowing that Mephibosheth was now the heir apparent to the throne, and that the victors would eagerly seek to apprehend him; to secure and conceal her precious charge, took him up and fled; but fell, and crippled him for life. To how many perils are children exposed in their rearing: and how thankful should we feel to the providence of God, if we have escaped them.

— Yet, instead of pitying Mephibosheth, we ought rather to congratulate him on this affliction. In the earlier stages of society corporeal accomplishments are much rated; and had not Mephibosheth been thus disfigured and dismembered, the adherents of Saul's house would probably, as he was the next heir, have proclaimed *him*, instead of his uncle Ishbosheth—and then it is most likely he would have been murdered, as *he* was. Who knows what is good for a man in this vain life? And who knows what is evil? How often have we deprecated things for which we have afterwards been thankful! How much do we owe to the disappointments of life! What dangers have ill health, or reduced substance, prevented!

> "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
> "The clouds ye so much dread
> "Are big with mercy, and shall break
> "In blessings on your head."

— "And the king said, Where is he? And Ziba said, Behold he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar." Here, probably, resided in obscurity, his mother's relations: and here he himself was forgotten, like a dead man out of mind. Machir, with whom he dwelt, seems to have been a noble, generous man, who took charge of Mephibosheth from pity for one born to honour, and the son of so excellent a father; and not from any disaffection to David. Yea, we afterward find him equally kind to David; and furnishing him with every refreshment when he was driven an exile into his neighbourhood, by the rebellion of Absalom. And may not David's kindness to Mephibosheth at this time have induced Machir the more promptly and extensively to exert himself in favour of David in his subsequent distress? If so, it says, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."

The aid we impart to-day, we may want to-morrow. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The king sent and fetched him.—And observe his introduction at Court—When he was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. David had done the very same to this cripple's father a few years before, bowing himself three times to the earth. What changes take place in the conditions of men! David had too reflective a mind not to think of this. He had probably never seen Mephibosheth before, though he was born about the time of his intimacy with his beloved father. The first thing I suppose he would look for in his features, would be the image of Jonathan. David had too much sensibility not to be impressed with the affecting scene. Feeling, is always brief in expression—He utters only one word: but the manner in which he pronounced it said every thing—And David said, MEPHIBOSHETH! It was the language of surprize, tenderness, and endearment.

— But why was he afraid of David? It is not probable that he apprehended any danger from him. But he had been living in the country, and in privacy, from a child. And it is no unusual thing for a stranger to be intimidated at the presence of a very superior and extraordinary man. Madame de Stael, though accustomed to the highest society, and endued with such powers of address and conversation, says she was breathless in the company of the late Emperor of France; and could never rise above this prostration of mind. But David was a greater man, and as great a warrior, considering the age in which he lived. Seeing the depression of his countenance, and his tremour;

— David said to him, "Fear not, for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan's sake"—and gave him the assurance of two things. First. Upon the suppression of Ishbosheth's faction, Saul's estate had been confiscated to the crown—this he

promises to give him, with all its future revenues. And secondly. He assigns him a residence in his palace, and a constant access to himself: I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

— And how did Mephibosheth receive these honours? He was not one of those who take every favour as a debt, and imagine their friends are only doing their duty; and very imperfectly, too, perhaps; in every kindness they show them—But he exclaims, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" A dog is fitter to be under the table, than at the side of it; and a dead dog is fitter for the ditch, than the palace —It was a strong, proverbial expression, used to signify how mean, and base, and unworthy, and unqualified, he deemed himself. But if *he* received these benefits from David with so much thankfulness and humility, how ought *we* to feel under those blessings which God bestows upon us? And here let me ask three questions.

And, first—not to dwell on the ordinary bounties of his providence: Has He not remembered us in our low estate? Has he not sought and saved our souls? Has he not restored our forfeited inheritance? Has he not given us a name and a place in his house, that we may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom?

Secondly. And are not the blessings He has conferred upon us infinitely greater than those Mephibosheth received from David? It might seem an immense thing to a worldly mind, to be fetched out of distant obscurity; and enriched with a royal demesne; and allowed to live at a splendid Court. But Mephibosheth, perhaps, was not even so happy as before: and for whatever purposes he valued his elevation, he soon left it; and found that he had set his eyes on that which is not. But we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places

in Christ. Our dignities and enjoyments yield the most perfect satisfaction. And they will endure for ever.

Thirdly. And how much less reason had we to look for such favours from God, than Mephibosheth had to expect such bestowments from David? He was David's fellow-creature; and had a claim founded in a community of nature. He was the son of an intimate friend, to whom he was under obligation. He was always a relation; being the child of his brother-in-law. Though a sufferer, he was innocent, and had always conducted himself properly towards David.

— But, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? We were strangers—enemies by wicked works—unworthy of the least of all his mercies—deserving that his wrath should come upon us as the children of disobedience. What then ought to be our self-abasement? our gratitude? But where are they? Are they urging us to exclaim, Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us!—By thy grace we are what we are! Are they inducing us to utter abundantly the memory of his great goodness; and recommend him all the day long to others? Are they constraining us, by his mercies, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service?

AUG. 15.—"*Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed.*"
Psalm lxv. 1.

HERE we have the Church's praise, and the Church's vow—the suspension of the one; and the fulfilment of the other.

In general, God waits for our praise. And how slow and reluctant are we in rendering it! And how seldom, at last, do we render, according to the benefit done unto us! But here praise waits in Zion for Him. The meaning is, that the deliverance or blessing which they were in need of, had not arrived; but they were looking for it—They had their harp in their hand, ready to strike up a song of thanksgiving; but delay kept them *silent*. Praise waited, therefore, because the Church waited.

And this is no unusual thing, first, as to their spiritual experience. They wish to be able to view Him as the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever; and to claim all the exceeding great and precious promises as their own. But they are doubtful and uncertain; yea, they often exclude themselves from all part and lot in the matter. Now we cannot praise him for what we think he has not done for us, or given to him; but only for what he has. If, therefore, he has forgiven, and accepted us, the acknowledgment of the blessing requires the knowledge of it. Yet how many are in a state of anxiety, waiting for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; and praying, Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation! And,

Secondly, as to Providential dispensations. How long was it, even after David had been anointed by Samuel, before he was established on the throne! How long did Joseph wait, with every prospect growing darker, before his prophetic dreams were accomplished! And so Abraham, "after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise." God keeps back, till self-despair and the failure of creature confidence have spread a dark ground, on which his glory *must* be seen. He loves to astonish, as well as succour. He will convince us, in future difficulties, that he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Therefore, at eventide it is light: and he turneth the shadow of death into the morning.

Here, however, let it be observed, that Christians cannot be ever *entirely* silent. They have always much to praise God for. Whatever be their present condition—it might have been much worse—yea, in every thing they are to give thanks. Nor will they be silent *long*. The vision is only for an appointed time. Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. And they need not be silent *at all* if they have faith in God: for faith can see the certainty of the thing before it takes place; and cause us always to triumph in Christ, while yet the warfare is not actually accomplished.

If hope deferred maketh the heart sick, when it cometh it is a tree of life. Therefore says the Church, "Unto Thee shall the vow be performed." The vow means their solemn engagement to praise Him, when the deliverance or blessing arrived. "If He appears to my joy, I will give him the glory that is due unto his Name—witness my vow." We are not fond of vows. They often ensnare the soul, and give the Enemy an advantage over us. And Christians, as they advance in self-knowledge, are commonly more disposed to pray *to* God, than to stipulate *with* him. It is a useful hint which Cowper gives us—

> "Beware of Peter's word;
> "Nor confidently say,
> "I never *will* deny Thee, Lord;
> "But, grant I never may."

Yet vows, in some cases, may be useful. They may prove as a kind of fence to the field, or hem to the garment. They may serve to remind us, when we forget; and to humble us, when we fail. But two things should be always observed. The first is, that they be formed in an entire dependence upon Divine grace. "By Thee only will we make mention of thy Name." "Through God we shall do valiantly."

"Man's wisdom is to seek
"In God his strength alone;
"And e'en an angel would be weak,
"That trusted in his own."

The second is, that, when we have made them, we should be concerned to fulfil them. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Yet how often have men bound themselves when they were in danger, sickness, and affliction; and, forgetting or violating their vow, have turned again to folly! Even Jacob, after all his solemn covenanting with God, in the prospect of his journey, was awfully remiss upon his return; till, Divinely rebuked, he said—"Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Hannah was more exemplary. She had vowed, that, if her prayer was answered, she would give her son to the Lord, as long as he lived. The surrender was painful: but as soon as she had weaned him, she took him to Shiloh, and brought him to Eli: "And she said, Oh, my lord! as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

AUG. 16.—"*Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou*

hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." Matt. xvii. 27.

How well was it foretold that his name should be called, Wonderful!

What a surprising combination of attributes was displayed in him! Observe the case before us. Here, while we behold his penury and dependence—so that he did not possess wherewithal to pay the Temple-tribute; we perceive his omniscience—so that in Peter's house he could pierce the waters of the sea, and discern a particular fish, and see what was in its body—and announce a piece of money there—and the very *name* of the coin. Surely the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

He who saw the *stater* in this fish, sees what money we are in the possession of—and how we acquired it—and the way in which we are using it. He sees whether we are needlessly hoarding, or wastefully expending it. He sees whether we are making it our hope and confidence, or valuing it only as an instrument of lawful enjoyment, and of pious and benevolent use. He sees the responsibilities of the owner; and knows how he will feel when he shall be called to leave it; and when he will be required to give an account of it at the last day.

Here we also behold his power and dominion. He is Lord of all. The beasts of the field obey him. At his bidding, not a dog moves his tongue in the departure of the Israelites. At his command, the dumb ass speaks with man's voice, and rebukes the madness of the Prophet. The fowls of the air obey him—At his order, the ravens bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and the evening.

The fishes of the sea obey him—At his command, a great fish swallows the disobedient, and disembarks the penitent, Jonah—And, here, a fish, at his requirement, goes and takes up from the bottom of the sea a stater, and then goes and bites at Peter's hook, with this in his maw! "All things are put under his feet: all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea."

Could any thing be better adapted to encourage the confidence of the disciples, in the kindness and all-sufficiency of his providence, when he was sending them forth, as sheep among wolves, and without any known supplies to live upon? He commissioned the Seventy to go in pairs through the whole country. But he sent them forth without purse, or scrip, or shoes. And they had, it would seem, many uneasy and distracting thoughts at the time. They did not, indeed, express them; but our Lord was aware of them, and remembered them. And when they came back, he brings them to their own recollection—"How came you to think that I, who employed you, should not provide for you?—Did you doubt my inclination, or my ability? When I sent you forth without purse and scrip, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing, Lord."

Are you called to leave behind you those who seem to hang on your care? Hear this Saviour at your dying bed, saying—"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widow trust in me." "O fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

AUG. 17.—"*Ye know all things.*" 1 John ii. 20.

THE reason, or the cause, is previously given—"We have an unction from the Holy One." This unction means the Spirit of grace and truth. This the Saviour possessed personally: he "was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power;" and had the Spirit without measure. And, as Mediator, for the suffering of death, he received all the fulness of it for the supply of his people. They therefore derive it from him; and it is not only sanctifying, but illuminating: it leads them "into all truth;" and "they know all things." This is a bold expression; but the extensiveness of it must be taken with four distinctions.

First. It means only things *religious*. It does not intend to intimate that every Christian is familiar with the secrets of Nature; the resources of trade; the mysteries of government; the structure of language; and a thousand other things. With regard to these, he may be far surpassed by the people of the world. Not that religion stupifies its possessor—yea, it is favourable to the acquisition of knowledge generally, by rousing and employing the mind, and thereby improving it—But it is distinguishable from learning and science; and makes us acquainted with "the things which accompany salvation."

Secondly. It means not only things religious, but *revealed*. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This passage should never be forgotten. It would draw some persons a little further from the decrees of God, and a little nearer to his commands. The Sacred Writers prophesy but in part. Had every thing been revealed in the Scripture, the world could not have contained the books that would have been written: and our attention would have been so divided and diffused, that the one thing needful would have been for-

gotten. There are numberless subjects, upon which a busy and curious mind would speculate, concerning which the Word is silent. But where God says nothing, we are not to be wise above what is written. If men will conjecture, let them conjecture without devouring much of their time, or injuring their temper; and without censoriousness, self-conceit, and positiveness—He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream. What is the chaff to the wheat? When our Saviour had foretold the duty and destination of Peter; and Peter, not satisfied with this, enquired concerning John—"Lord, and what shall this man do?" instead of answering him, he reproved his impatient and presumptuous curiosity: "What if I will that he tarry till I come; what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Thirdly. It not only means things revealed; but revealed things of *importance*. Every thing, even in the Scripture, is not equally momentous and interesting. Some things are hard to be understood; but then it is not necessary to be able to understand them. Yet such things as these, are not without their use, if they make us humble, by shewing us the limits of the human understanding; and lead us, while we *adore here*, to *study elsewhere*. How many things are there in the geography, the chronology, the natural philosophy of the Scriptures, in which we may be safely unversed! A man may be able to number his days, so as to apply his heart unto wisdom, without knowing when Antichrist will be destroyed. He may not know what creature Behemoth was, or where Ophir was; and yet he may know what is life eternal; and the way to it, he may know. The Jews had the fiery cloudy pillar, not to examine, but to follow. They knew no more of its essence at the end of forty years, than at the beginning: but it had led them, by a right way, to the City of Habitation. There are things which concern the Lord Jesus: and to know these is the excellency of knowledge.

These will make us wise unto salvation. There are things that are ornamental to a Christian—and these are not to be undervalued; but others are essential to his very being. Some things conduce to our comfort; but others involve even our safety. It is desirable, but not equally necessary, that a Christian should be informed in all these truths.

Fourthly. With regard to things of importance, it only means a *comparative* knowledge of these, in our present state. Of the God of grace, as well as of the God of nature, we are compelled to say—"How small a portion is known of Him!" What one truth is there, that we can trace back completely to its rise, or follow on to its last outfall? We read of things which angels desire to look into; of a peace which passeth all understanding; of a joy unspeakable. The love of Christ passeth knowledge.

> "The Cross, the Manger, and the Throne,
> "Are big with glories yet unknown."

More we cannot concede. If Christians are comparatively ignorant, they are comparatively wise. They are children of the light, and of the day. They have an understanding given them to know Him that is true. Not that they are endued with a new physical faculty; but they have another kind of knowledge—and it is as superior, as it is peculiar. There is as much difference between their present and their former knowledge, as between the shining of the glow-worm and the vital lustre of the sun. They have a *heart* to know. They see Divine things, not only in their reality, but in their *beauty* and *excellency*; and, while this gives them a firmer conviction of their certainty than they had before, so it gains their affection to them, and brings their souls under their influence. Thus, with them, the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. They walk in the light as He is in the light. The secret of

he Lord is with them, and he shews them his cove-
ant—"The natural man receiveth not the things
f the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto
im: neither can he know them, because they are
piritually discerned. But he that is spiritual *judgeth
ll things!*"

Thus another reproach is rolled away. Christians
re not only considered as slaves; as cowards; as the
ictims of gloom and melancholy; but are often
espised, or pitied, as fools. Yet are they the wisest
eople in the world. Their religion, from first to last,
wisdom. And it is justified of all her children.

AUG. 18.—"*My voice shalt thou hear in the morn-
g, O Lord.*" Psalm v. 3.

UTHORS have found the morning the best time for
udy and composition—hence it has been called
he friend of the muses. It would be easy to prove
hat it is equally a friend to the graces and the duties
—it is the finest season for reflection and devotion.
avid found it so; and therefore resolves: "My
oice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord."
What voice? The voice of praise: and the voice
f prayer—the one excited by looking back; the
ther, by looking forward.

— How much is there in the morning to call
orth the voice of thanksgiving! Let us think of the
eason we have just passed through. How many
ouseless creatures this night have had no place
here to lay their head! How many victims of
ccident and disease have been full of tossing to
nd fro, until the dawning of the day; their beds
ave not comforted them, nor their couch eased
eir complaint! How many have been deprived

of repose while attending their neighbours, friends, and relations, in sickness and sorrow! How many, since the last setting sun, have entered an awful eternity! How many, this night, have been cut off in their sins! Many have been terrified, robbed, injured, murdered, by wicked and unreasonable men! How many have been consumed by fire, or drowned with water! How many, this night, have been engaged in works of darkness; and who, if any knew them, would be in the terrors of the shadow of death! How many have risen this morning to pass the day in anguish! How many to suffer want! How many, who have all things richly to enjoy, have risen only to live another day without God in the world! They lie down and rise up like the beasts that perish: God is not in all their thoughts. And is it otherwise with us? What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together.

— And with how many of these merciful nights have we been favoured! Hence, perhaps, we have been so little affected with the goodness of God in them. How strange! that what increases the greatness of our obligation, should diminish the sense of it! Yet it is by the interruption, the suspension, the want of our comforts, we are made to learn the value of them. Let us guard against this perverseness of ingratitude. Let us remember, that if our mercies are common, they must be numerous; and so multiply the claims to our praise.

— And shall our gratitude evaporate in a mere morning acknowledgment? Shall we not, by the mercies of God, dedicate ourselves to his service; and be in his fear all the day long?

And when we think of the day before us, how much is there to awaken concern! And what is *our* concern, without the attention of God? He shall

therefore in the morning hear, not only the voice of praise, but the voice of prayer.

Who is to guide me through the day upon which I have entered? How much depends upon one mistake in my movements? And how easily may I go astray? The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning, for in Thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee."

Who is to guard me through the day? And I am much more exposed when awake, than when asleep. My soul is more exposed—more exposed to sin—and sin is the greatest evil. And what am I, to resist a corrupt heart, a wicked world, and all the powers of darkness? "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe. Be Thou my arm every morning; my salvation also in the time of trouble."

Who is to help me through the day? I have many duties to discharge. I am to live soberly, righteously, and godly. I am to walk in wisdom towards those that are without: I am to speak the truth in love: I am to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. "Lord, without thee, I can do nothing. Let thy grace be sufficient for me; and thy strength made perfect in weakness."

Who is to give me success in the business of the day? I know I ought not to be idle; but to be diligently and prudently employed in my lawful calling. Means are mine; but how much more is necessary than my wisdom and anxiety. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for me to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

Who is to prepare me for the events of the day? And I know not what the day may bring forth. Perhaps I may receive the most unwelcome intelligence. Perhaps I may sustain losses in property. Perhaps I may meet with mortifications from my fellow-creatures; and be tried with disappointments in friends. My child may this day fall sick. The desire of mine eyes may be taken away with a stroke. There may be but a step between me and death. It is wonderful we live a day through. "May I know how to be abased, or how to abound. If in the world I have tribulation, in the Saviour may I have peace. So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom—That whether I live, I may live unto the Lord; or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord: so that, living and dying, I may be the Lord's."

AUG. 19.—"*I am married unto you.*" Jer. iii. 14.

MARRIAGE is the nearest and the most intimate of all human relations. It is surpassed only by the union between soul and body.—Here are two persons meeting together, who perhaps never saw or heard of each other some time before; yet, coming under the power of this ordinance, are united in a connexion that exceeds the claims of nature, and the wife becomes dearer than the dearest parent. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."

—Thus Christians, though once strangers, and far off, become the people of God, a people nigh unto him; yea, one with him, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten—and He is not ashamed to own the relation—"I am married unto

ou." What is supremely and essentially included
i this relation, when properly established?

— In such a marriage, there is mutual love. his love regards the person, and not the enowments. And such a love there is between God nd his people. It commenced on his side much arlier than on their's; and his love to them, prouced their love to him. For love begets love: and e love him, because he first loved us. Yet the ve *is* mutual—and he says, "I love them that ve me."

The same may be said of mutual choice. In a roper marriage, the parties freely elect each other. od has chosen his people; and they have chosen im. For, though once averse to him, as their Lord nd portion, they are made willing in the day of his ower; and this power is not violence, but influence —the influence of wisdom and goodness. He works i them to will and to do of his good pleasure. Ie draws them, and they run after him; and they an all say, from the heart, "Whom have I in heaven, ut Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire eside Thee."

In this connexion, there is also confidence and ommunication. Where this is wanting, the spirit f it is materially injured; and the relation is very efectively maintained. It is readily allowed, that he woman should not carry on designs concealed rom the husband; but is not every thing here eciprocal? And is *he* justified in treating her with eserve and silence? Yet there are many wives, who ave had no intimation of the state of their husband's ffairs, till they have found themselves plunged into condition overwhelming them with surprize, as ell as calamity.—The secret of the Lord is with hem that fear him; and he will shew them his ovenant. And they, in all their ways, acknowledge im. They pour out their hearts before him; they ide nothing from him.

There is, also, in this alliance, fellowship and community of goods. However poor or mean the wife was before, she is now raised to a participation of the husband's rank and affluence: and however free and independent he was before, the husband now enters into all the condition of the wife. And thus the believer dedicates himself to God, with all he is and has. He feels His cause his own; he deplores its reproaches, and rejoices in its success. And God gives himself, with all he is and has, to the believer. In all his afflictions He is afflicted: and he that toucheth him, toucheth the apple of His eye.

Finally. There is complacency and delight. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over thee with singing—

How wonderful is this!—and yet how true!—

How blessed are the people who are in such a case!—

Art thou in this happy, this glorious condition? All hail! Thy Maker is thy husband. There was joy in the presence of the angels of God the hour thou gavest thy consent to the proposals of the Gospel.

Art thou willing to be united to him? His ministers invite and woo thee. Come—for all things are now ready. Resemble not Israel, who would have none of him. And so were given up to their own hearts' lust. Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.

Aug. 20.—"*His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*"

Hos. vi. 3.

"His going forth," and "his coming," mean his displays and his communications, on behalf of those who earnestly and perseveringly seek after him; according to the words immediately preceding—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord." *This* contains the *assurance* of their success. But here is added the *illustration* of it. It consists of two images, equally beautiful and encouraging.

The first derived from the morning—"His going forth is prepared as the morning." When the morning is not yet come, we fully rely upon it. We know it is coming: we know it is secured in the appointment of Providence, and the arrangements of nature. It never yet failed; and it never will, as long as the world endures. And does not the God of all grace express the immutability of his counsel, by the certainty of this very allusion? "Thus saith the Lord, If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night; and that there shall not be day or night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David, my servant." What can hinder the approach and the rising of the sun? And his going forth is prepared as *surely* as the morning.

— And as *luminously*, too. The morning drives away the darkness, and shines upon our path; so that we see where we are; and how to move. "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." The Lord will come, and manifest himself to his people. He will shew them his covenant. He will lead them into all truth. And, with regard to doctrine, and experience, and practice; and also their interest in the Divine favour; he will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will he do unto them, and not forsake them.

It is also as *delightsome* as the morning. The

night is a season of gloom, as it is a period of confinement, and danger, and fear, and anxiety. Paul's mariners, in the storm, cast four anchors, and wished for the day. David refers to travellers and sentinels, who watch for the morning, as the image of his waiting for the Lord. Some nights are less cheerless than others; but, at best, they have only the moon and stars—the sun is wanting. He alone can make the morning: and when he comes, the birds sing, the lambs play, and man partakes of the cheerfulness that spreads all around. "Truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Creatures are pleasing; but none of them can supply the place of God. He is our sun, as well as our shield: and the language of the gracious heart is—"Oh! when wilt Thou come unto me? Thou alone canst put my fears to flight. Thou alone canst inspire me with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But the morning comes not all at once, but *gradually*. What a difference is there between the first glimmerings of the dawn, and the splendour of noon! So the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The second is derived from the rain—"He shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth." God asks, "Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles send rain?" He claims the production as his own divine prerogative; and justly wonders that we do not notice it more than we do—"Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain; both the former and the latter in his season." In Judea the rain was less frequent and more periodical, than with us. It peculiarly fell after autumn and spring; that is, just after seed time, and just before reaping: the former to soften the ground, and quicken the grain, and aid the springing thereof: the latter, to fill the corn in the ear, and hasten its maturity.

What would nature be without rain? We are equally dependent on the grace of God. But, under the influences of his Word and Spirit, we revive and grow as the corn. These influences are always needful: but is it pressing the metaphor, to observe, that there are two seasons when they are peculiarly experienced? The one is connected with the beginning of the Divine life—this may be called the former rain. The other, with the close of it—this may be called the latter rain. The one is to enliven. The other, to confirm. To the "former," many can look back, and ask,

"Where is the blessedness I knew,
"When first I saw the Lord?
"Where is that soul-refreshing view
"Of Jesus and his Word?"

Others are longing for the "latter." Their salvation is nearer than when they believed. But they do not yet feel as they wish. They want more faith, more hope, more consolation—more of all the fulness of God. Let the last showers descend; and the appointed weeks of harvest come; and the produce be brought home, with "shoutings, Grace, grace, unto it!"

AUG. 21.—"*Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.*"
John xi. 3.

THESE words furnish several sources of remark and instruction.

The first regards the *love* of Jesus. In his love to Lazarus, there was something peculiar, and something common. He loved him with a partial, and he loved him with a divine affection. To know Christ after the flesh, is a privilege which has long

since ceased; and to be loved by him under the advantage of his humanity, was a favour restricted to few. But there is, however, another sense in which, as he loved Lazarus, so he loves us: and though we share not in the partial regard of the friend, we are the subjects of the divine regard of the Saviour. This love commenced from no excellency in us, like the love of creatures. It took knowledge of us, as sinners. It began before the foundation of the world. It led him to espouse our cause, and brought him under an engagement to suffer and die for us—His people remember this love more than wine.

The second regards the *affliction* of Lazarus—He "was sick." Sickness is one of the common calamities of life; and it is one of the most painful and trying. Yet Lazarus was exercised with it, though he was loved of Jesus. This explains the nature of his love, and shews us that it does not exempt its subjects from distress. It is not the foolish fondness of a father, who, when correction is necessary, spares the child, for his crying. He that thus "spareth the rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him, chastens him betimes." Could we now see, as we shall hereafter, the principle, the design, the alleviations, the advantages of the afflictions of the righteous, we should perceive that they are not only compatible with Divine love; but the fruit, the proof of it. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

The third regards the *mission* of the sisters—"Therefore the sisters *sent* unto Jesus." Their affliction led to this application. To induce us to send to him, is the design of our trials; for we are too forgetful of him in ease and prosperity—"In their affliction they will seek me early"—What can

we do without him, then? Therefore, says the Teacher, as well as the Chastiser; "Call upon me in the day of trouble." And what a solace! what a relief! what a source of support, sanctification, and deliverance, is prayer! John's disciples therefore, when their master was beheaded, not only took up the body and buried it; but "went and told Jesus." "I will say unto God," was the resolve of Job, "do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." And, says David, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Thus it has been with all who have *heard* the rod—They have all said, "A glorious high throne from the beginning has been the place of our sanctuary."

— Therefore his *sisters* sent unto him. It is pleasing when, in our natural relations, we have spiritual friends who will carry our cases, and spread them before the Lord. Many in their sickness have connexions about them, who are kind and attentive; but they never speak a word to them of their souls; and never administer to them the cordials of the Gospel, though they often apply self-righteous opiates to stupify conscience. They send for the physician and the lawyer, but do not address the Saviour for them. But some, like Lazarus, have those who will bear them upon their minds, and call in the aid of the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof, in the time of trouble. And what an encouragement and comfort is this to those who are scarcely able to lift a thought to God for themselves; whose broken and distracted petitions seem unworthy of notice; and who know that the prayer of the righteous availeth much!

The fourth is, the *message* they conveyed to him—"Saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." From hence we may learn two things.—First. The Lord's love gives us encouragement in prayer, and

furnishes us with our most prevailing plea in dealing with him. They do not say, he whom *we* love—though this was true. Nor he who loves *thee*—though this was true: but, he whom *thou* lovest. How wise, how expressive was this! As much as to say, "Hast not thou deigned to regard him already? Has not thy kindness for him raised our confidence in thee, and our expectation from thee? Will not others turn their eyes towards thee, and see whether thy friendship is like the friendship of the world, which leaves its dependents in the hour of necessity and distress?" "A true friend loveth at all times; but is born for adversity." We read of pleading with God; and filling our mouth with arguments: but our most suitable and successful ones must be derived from himself, and especially from his own goodness. "I plead nothing of my own—not even my love to thee:

> 'Yet I love Thee, and adore:
> 'Oh for grace to love thee more!'

But my love to thee is weak and cold; and whatever it be, it is the effect of thy love to me. I was once a stranger, and an enemy, and should have remained so still, hadst not thou found a way into my heart. But thou hast redeemed me by thy blood. Thou hast called me by thy grace. Thou hast opened my blind eyes; and turned my feet into the path of peace.—And after all this love, wilt thou cast me off? Couldest thou not have destroyed me, without shewing me such things as these?"

Secondly. It is better for us, when we seek the Lord for temporal things, to refer our suit to his own good pleasure. I admire the manner in which these pious women addressed him. They do not prescribe—they hardly petition—they particularize nothing. They do not say, Lord, come to his house—Come immediately—Remove his malady—What will

become of us, if Lazarus should die! But they state the case—and leave it: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."—When, therefore, we have to pray for deliverence from some trouble, or the acquisition of some outward favour, let us do it with modesty and reserve. For these blessings are promised, not absolutely, but conditionally; that is, if they are good for us: and in the very same way they are to be implored. We must not desire them, if they would be hurtful; and they may be injurious: and God perfectly knows whether this would be the result of success and indulgence. Had the Jews prayed in this manner, for flesh, he would not have given them their hearts' desire; and sent leanness into their souls. What we extort, as it were, from God, by restless importunity, turns the blessing into a curse. The feverish and inflamed state of the mind, renders the gratification of the craving dangerous. We cannot be too earnest with God about spiritual blessings; but as to every thing of a temporal nature, temperance of mind becomes us; and, in resignation at his feet, we must endeavour to say—"Here I am; let him do what seemeth him good.

'Assure me of thy wondrous love,
'Immeasurably kind:
'And, Lord, to thine unerring will
'Be every wish resigned.'"

AUG. 22.—"*The word of Christ.*" Col. iii. 16.

So the Scriptures are called—because he is the author; and—because he is the subject of their contents. They are not only derived from the inspiration of his Spirit; but they are full of his person, and character, and sufferings, and glory. There is

nothing, perhaps, admitted into them, but has some relation to him. We cannot, in many instances, trace this connexion at present: but we shall see more of it when, in the Church, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days. And, perhaps, to explore it perfectly, will be a part of the blessedness and employment of heaven. But when our Lord urged his hearers to search the Scriptures, he said, "They are they that testify of *me*." And, going to Emmaus with the two disciples, "he expounded unto them, in *all* the Scriptures, the things concerning *himself*."

We may divide the Scriptures into six parts.

There is the *historical* part. He is the substance of this. In Adam, we see him the head and representative of his people. In Noah, as the restorer of a new world. In Isaac, as a victim laid on the altar. In Joseph, as a sufferer and a saviour. In Moses, as a lawgiver. In Aaron, as a high priest. In Joshua, as a leader and commander. In Solomon, as the prince of peace. In Jonah, as buried, and rising from the grave.

There is the *ceremonial* part. Of this, he is the substance. He is the body of all its shadows, the reality of all its types. He is the Rock, whose streams followed the Israel of God. He is the manna, the true bread, that came down from heaven. In the City of Refuge, we behold him as our security from avenging justice. And in every bleeding sacrifice, as the atonement for our sins.

There is the *prophetical* part. Here he is all in all. "To him gave *all* the prophets witness." "The testimony of Jesus, is the *Spirit* of prophecy."

There is the *promissory* part—And how large and glorious a portion of it is filled with exceeding great and precious promises! What blessing can we need, that is not furnished under the pledge of a God that cannot lie? "But all the promises of

God in him, are yea; and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us."

There is the *practical* part. To be a Christian, is, to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again. Of good works, his example is the rule; his love is the motive; his Spirit is the author. He is the altar on which all our sacrifices are to be offered. Prayer is asking in his Name. We are to love our wives, even as he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.

There is the *doctrinal* part—And what is the great mystery of godliness? "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Every doctrine of the Gospel, as treated by the inspired authors, leads to him. If we are justified, it is by his righteousness. If we are sanctified, it is by his Spirit. If the glory of God shines forth, it is in the face of Jesus Christ. Providence is, all power given unto him in heaven and in earth. The whole of Christianity is called, "The truth as it is in Jesus."

Take him out of the Bible, and you take the sun out of our world; and the soul out of the body—And what is left?

It is this that so powerfully endears the Sacred Volume to every real Christian—It is the word of One, he supremely loves, and feels infinitely necessary to all his comfort, and all his hope. Of him, he can never read, or hear, enough.

O my soul! let this Word of Christ dwell in thee, richly, in all wisdom. Never forget the admonition of kindness, as well as authority: "Bind it continually upon thine heart, and tie it about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."

AUG. 23.—"*Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*" Ps. xxxvii. 34.

HERE is a twofold admonition.

First. "Wait on the Lord."—'I hope I do so.' But are you *sure* of this? Is there any thing in your religious exercises that really deserves the name of waiting on God? For persons may read without attention, and hear without faith, and sing without praise, and pray without desire. They may draw nigh to him with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is far from him.—But God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth.—'I hope I do *thus* wait on Him.' But do you thus wait on him *sufficiently?* First. In the sanctuary? Secondly. In the family? Thirdly. In the closet? Fourthly. In all your concerns—like David, who said, "On thee do I wait all the day, Lord!"

Secondly. "And keep his way." This is beautifully connected with the former. Wait—and work. Wait—and walk. Get grace—and exercise it. Persevere in the use of means, if present comfort be withholden. Neither give up the course in which you are engaged—nor turn aside—nor stand still—nor look back—nor seem to come short; though superiors frown—and companions reproach—and iniquity abounds—and the love of many waxes cold—and numbers walk no more with him. In all opposition, and through every discouragement, let your soul follow hard after God. Thus did Job; and therefore he could say, "My foot hath held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." So it was also with the Church. "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore

broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death." We have enough to animate us to hold on—"After two days will he revive us: in the third day will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Here is also a twofold promise.

First. "He shall exalt thee to inherit the land." God is the source of all elevation and honour. He raised the Jews to the possession of Canaan, the glory of all lands. But he dignifies Christians with a title to a better, even a heavenly country; where, "with kings, are they upon the throne."—He advances them here, as well as hereafter. For he is "the glory of their strength, and in his favour their horn is exalted"—And not only with regard to spiritual, but temporal things. For "the meek shall inherit the earth." Not that all of them are rich and great in the world. So far from it, they are commonly a poor and an afflicted people. Not that every thing is actually in their possession, or that they have a civil right to it—dominion is not founded in grace: but security is; peace is; contentment is; happiness is. And as to covenant interest, and enjoyment, and improvement, "all things are theirs."

Secondly. "When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it." And they will be cut off. They are often cut off, even in life, from their places, and riches, and prospects. At death they are cut off from all their possessions and comforts: for, poor as their portion here is,

"'Tis all the happiness they know."

Yea, they are then cut off from all the means of grace, and the hopes of mercy. In the last day

they will be cut off from "the resurrection of life;" and before the assembled world, they will hear the Judge irreversibly excluding them from himself, the source of all happiness—"*Depart*, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

Dreadful as the ruin is, there is nothing in it to alarm the *praying* and *persevering* believer. He will have no share in it. The vengeance that falls and crushes the foe, will not—cannot touch the friend. He will only be a spectator; and strange as it may now seem, the sight will not affect his happiness. But is it necessary to go further; and represent it as a source of pleasure and delight? Surely it is enough that he will see it, and adore the mercy that graciously saved him; and *acquiesce* in the justice that righteously condemns others.

As the saint will only see the destruction of the sinner; so the wicked will see the salvation of the righteous, and not partake of it. But to see such a blessedness; to see what was once within his own reach, and is now enjoyed by others—must be a source of the keenest anguish. Such was the display of plenty to the interdicted nobleman at the gate of Samaria: "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes: but thou shalt not eat thereof." And we know who has said, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

AUG. 24.—"*Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*" Zech. xiii. 7.

— WE know who this Shepherd was. God speaks of him, in the former part of the verse, as "his

ow;" and calls him "his Shepherd." He was l's Shepherd, because he appointed him to take charge of his Church, and to perform, on their alf, all the duties implied in the pastoral office. ice it was foretold of him, "He shall feed his k like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall tly lead those that are with young." This cha- er the Saviour applied to himself, with an attri- e of distinction: "I am the good Shepherd." l styles him, "That great Shepherd of the ep." Peter calls him, "The chief Shepherd"—and, he Shepherd and Bishop of souls"—Let the lan- ge of my heart be—"Tell me, O Thou, whom soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou est thy flock to rest at noon.

'Tis there, with the lambs of thy flock,
'There only I covet to rest;
'To lie at the foot of the Rock,
'Or rise to be hid in thy breast:
'Tis there I would always abide,
'Nor ever a moment depart;
'Preserv'd evermore at thy side,
'Eternally hid in thine heart.'"

—He was to be "smitten." Every one that ers this vale of tears is a sufferer. But he was man of sorrows;" and could say—"Behold, and if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which lone unto me, wherewith the *Lord* hath afflicted in the day of his fierce anger." For, though he fered from devils, who had their hour and power darkness; and though he suffered from men—for, inst him, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the ntiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered ether—yet it was only to do whatsoever *his* hand l *his* counsel determined before to be done. It ased the Lord to bruise him: he put him to grief.

When, therefore, the Jews esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, they were right in the fact, but mistaken in the cause. They supposed he suffered for guilt; and so he did—but the guilt was not his own. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Here let me contemplate the evil of sin in the sufferings of this Divine Victim. And here let me dwell on that love, which passeth knowledge, that led him, all-innocent as he was, voluntarily to become a sacrifice on our behalf; and to suffer, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. The glory of the Gospel; the hope of the sinner; the triumph of the believer—all lies here—"It is Christ that died."

— It was a sad thing that his own disciples should abandon him, at the very moment he was going to die for them, and after all their professions of determined adherence to him—But when the Shepherd was smitten, "the sheep were scattered." In this desertion, he was not taken by surprise; for he had previously said, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." Yet how much he felt it, may be inferred from his lamentation and complaint: "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforter, but I found none"—Let not his people count it a strange thing, if they are betrayed or forsaken—It should remind them of the fellowship of his sufferings.

But behold an instance of forgiving mercy and renewing grace—"And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." His disciples were little in the eyes of the world; and less in their own. They were few in number, and poor in condition. They were weak in faith and fortitude—and were now dismayed, and desponding. But he did not give them over unto death.

knew their frame; he remembered that they were
st. As soon as he was risen from the dead, he
peared to them—not clothed in terror; but saying,
eace be unto you." He exerted again the power-
l influence of his Holy Spirit; and renewed them
ain unto repentance. He established their faith
d hope. He gave them enlarged views, and fresh
rage: so that they were ready to suffer and die
r his Name.

Surely

"His heart is made of tenderness—
"His bowels melt with love."

bruised reed will he not break; and smoking
x will he not quench, till he send forth judgment
to victory. And in his Name shall the Gentiles
ist.

Aug. 25.—"*O thou that hearest prayer! unto
e shall all flesh come.*" Psalm lxv. 2.

s have no claims upon God; and are not worthy
the least of all his mercies. It is therefore sur-
ising that he should hear prayer at all. But he
ories in it; and by nothing is he so much dis-
guished: he derives his fame, his character, from
—"O Thou that hearest prayer!"

And we need not wonder at this, when we consider
How *constantly* he has heard prayer; even ever since
en began to call upon the Name of the Lord.—And
w *many* prayers he has heard. If we are to pray
thout ceasing, the prayers of one individual, will be
ry numerous. What, then, is the aggregate multi-
de, that has been offered by all the millions that
er sought his face!—And how *largely* he answers
ayer—giving grace and glory, and withholding no

good thing pertaining to life and godliness.—And how *readily* he answers prayer: "Before they call," say he, "I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."—And how *certainly* he hears prayer. We have his promises, which are firmer than the earth and the heavens. It may not be easy to ascertain when, or how, he answers us, as the God of our salvation: but this we know, that he cannot deny us, without denying himself. He cannot lie—and he has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

— What should be the influence of this glorious truth? "Unto Thee shall all flesh come." If these words had stood separately, we should have taken them as affirming, that all flesh would come to him at the last day to be judged. But the reference is not to God on the judgment-seat, but on the mercy-seat: and it is well that we can kneel at the latter, before we stand at the former.—The meaning is, that men shall seek to him in *prayer*. And not some, but *many*. Not many, but *all*. Surely here is nothing less than a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles. Not only shall the seed of Jacob, his chosen, seek unto him; but those also that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world, crying only unto idols that could not save. The Jews, in later times, were carnal, and selfish, and averse to the extension of their privileges: but the more ancient and spiritual of their nation rejoiced in the prospect of it; and they had intimations from the beginning, that the Gentiles, also, should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ, by the Gospel—"All nations whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee." "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all people."

If the practice here insured is to result from the character here expressed, the character must be known. For "how can they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe on him, of whom they have not heard?" Accordingly, it is said, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering."

And, to notice this more personally, we see of what importance it is to entertain encouraging views of God. Confidence in his mercy and grace, will alone draw us into his presence. And therefore the ground of this confidence must be firm and obvious.

Much advantage, also, upon this principle, must result from reviews of our own experience of his goodness. All success is animating, especially in prayer. "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

— Let *me* come to him among all those that are coming. And immediately. For there is a time when he will not hear prayer. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

AUG. 26.—"*Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindnesses, and in mercies.*" Hosea ii. 19.

IN the covenant of grace, there is God's part, and there is our part. But God—or it would never be accomplished—undertakes for the latter, as well as the former—He engages to do all that is necessary *for* his people, and *in* them.

Here is the *nature* of the connexion he will establish with them—"I will *betroth* thee unto me." And the *manner* of it—"In *righteousness*, and in *judgment*, and in *lovingkindnesses*, and in *mercies*."

First. I will do it, says He—in *righteousness*—He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. But the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Righteousness, therefore, seems to require that he should punish them, rather than admit them into his favour. And awakened souls want to see a way in which God is just, as well as the justifier. And he has provided for this; and he tells us in the Gospel, that, though sin is pardoned, it is also condemned; and that, though the transgressor escapes, the curse falls upon another, who, by bearing it himself, redeems us from it, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The Law, therefore, instead of being injured, is magnified, and made honourable; and even more than it would have been by the destruction of the sinner. In the sinner's destruction, justice would have been always satisfying, but never satisfied. Whereas the satisfaction was now completed at once, "by the one offering up of himself." Then also justice would only have been displayed passively—but now, it is displayed actively, too. Then, it would have been displayed only in them—but now, it is also displayed by them. Then, they would have hated, and cursed it for ever—now, they love it, and delight to extol it.—For righteousness here is not to be taken only for the way in which he makes the guilty just, but the way in which he makes the depraved holy. This comes from the same gracious agency; and is equally necessary with the former; as he could not admit them to communion with himself while in a state of sin—For, "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" And, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?"

Secondly. In *judgment*. The Heathens placed

Mercury, the god of wisdom, by the side of Venus, the goddess of marriage: and for good reason; since there is nothing in which judgment is so needful—yet few things are entered upon with so little discretion and reflection. Hence the wretched consequences that ensue. What can be expected from those hasty and thoughtless matches, in which, adaptation, age, temper, and even piety, are all overlooked?—But God knows what he does; and why he does it. He has reasons, which justify the measure to his own infinite understanding. Hence salvation is called his counsel; in which also he is said to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence.—And this is true, not only as to the contriving and procuring of it; but also as to the applying. The place, the time, the manner, the means of their conversion; will all evince, when known, that his work is perfect; and his ways judgment. We see but little of this now. Yet there are openings into it which carry the mind away in contemplation and surprize; and which assure us much more remains for our discovery and rapture in the world of light.—This applies also to his people, as well as to God. Their choosing him, and consenting to his gracious proposals, will bear examination. It is wisdom: and wisdom which is justified of all her children. The world may censure; but they are able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. The spiritual judgeth all things, though he himself is judged of no man.

Thirdly. In *lovingkindness*. Without this, it were better for persons never to come together. The parties mutually need it; and need it daily. They should be filled with tenderness, to bear and sympathize with each other; and the law of kindness should rule in all their looks, words, and actions. This is seldom wanting on the female side. Their love is not only more pure and disinterested; but more fervent and undeclining; and better prepared to

endure privations and sacrifices. Men are fond of power and authority; and therefore they are commanded—not to govern them—this they will do readily enough; but to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them. God says to his Church: "You shall find me full of tenderness and compassion. I know your frame, and remember that you are dust. I will pity your infirmities, and spare you. If I afflict, it shall not be willingly. If I chide, I will not contend for ever. I will look to the heart, and judge you according to your meaning, and your desires."—It would seem strange to apply the exercise of this quality to *them*, as well as to Him. Kindness towards God seems too low an expression; but he himself has sanctioned it—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Every thing they do for Him, he takes kind at their hand: and their ingenuous disposition will make them fearful of grieving his Holy Spirit; and anxious to walk "worthy of him unto all pleasing."

Fourthly. In *mercies*. This is distinguisable from the former. *That* was the effect; *this* shews the cause—and it is mentioned, in addition to loving-kindness, to remind us that all we possess, or expect, springs solely from the free and undeserved grace of God—and also to meet those discouragements to which we are always liable, from a sense of our unworthiness and ill-deservings. There is not a just man on earth that liveth and sinneth not. In many things we offend all. What humiliations must a Christian feel, when he reviews even his Sabbaths, and holy communions! and when he compares his proficiency with his obligations and advantages! But God will not cast away his people; but have mercy upon them according to the *multitude* of his *tender* mercies. This is children's bread; and the children of God will not, cannot abuse it. Yea,

the more they are persuaded of this truth, the more holy, and cheerful, and vigorous they will be in duty. Grass that grows in orchards, and under trees, is of a sour quality: it wants the sun. Fruits that grow in the sun are richer and riper than those which grow in the shade. The best frame we can be in, is to be upholden by a free spirit, and to act under a full sense of our divine privileges. Let us therefore sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever, and if he ever *seems* to have forgotten to be gracious, let us plead with him, and say, "Where is thy zeal, and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained?" —Here again the import includes, not only that we receive mercy, but exercise it—not towards Him personally—this is impossible—and he needs it not. But his creatures need it; his people need it. And what is done to them, he will consider as done to himself. And what so just and proper, as that they who are forgiven, should forgive? And that they who live by mercy, should be merciful?

AUG. 27.—"— *Heirs.*—" Titus iii. 6.

IF we properly observe those who are Christians indeed, we shall find in them a peculiarity that distinguishes them from, and an importance that ranks them above, all other creatures. What an assemblage of qualities, excellencies, and advantages, must they possess, to do any thing like justice to the various and numberless representations, by which they are held forth to our view and admiration in the Scriptures of Truth! Let me contemplate them under the character of *Heirs.*

As such, we may consider them *in the grandeur of their estate.* A man may be an heir to a cottage,

or a large domain, or even a throne. But what is the inheritance of Christians! In one place they are called "heirs, according to promise"—In another, "heirs of the grace of life"—In another, "heirs, according to the hope of eternal life"—In another, "heirs of salvation"—In another, "heirs of the kingdom, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Paul prays that the Ephesians may be enlightened to know it; and speaks of "the hope of their calling;" and "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The inheritance of the worldling, who has his portion in this life; the inheritance of the Jew, in Canaan; the inheritance of Adam, in Paradise; the inheritance of angels, in heaven; all come far short of the believer's expectation. At present, it cannot be fully either described or conceived—It doth not yet appear what we shall be.

We may consider them in the *solidity of their title.* No person ever had a claim to an estate so clear and decisive as the Christian has to his inheritance. He may not, indeed, be certain of it in his own mind. There is a difference between a right, and the perception of it. An heir, by reason of his tender age, or infirmity, or disorder, may be unconscious of what awaits him. And Christians may be ignorant and fearful. They may condemn themselves, when God has justified them freely from all things: and they may conclude that they have no part nor lot in the matter, while yet their title is as valid as the word and oath of God can make it—It is also perfectly inseparable from the birth that makes them new creatures—for they are born of God—and, "if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ"—and, being one with him, their heirship is as undeniable as his.

We may view them, also, in the *certainty of their possession.* An heir who has had the clearest and fullest title to an estate, has yet never enjoyed it. To take

possession of it, perhaps he had to cross the sea, and was wrecked. Or he travelled by land, and was murdered. Or, in reaching maturity, he fell a prey to one of the many diseases to which humanity is liable.—Or, if *he* was preserved, the estate was destroyed: for there is no place of security on earth. Or, if the estate was not destroyed, it was *usurped*, and, by fraud and villainy, alienated from its lawful owner. How many figure away, only in the rights of others! But what shall hinder the Christian from realizing his hope? His inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him—where danger never comes. And the heir is as safe as the estate; being "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."

But observe these heirs in the circumstances of their *minority*. For there is a period of non-age: and "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Before this season arrives, he must submit to many restraints, not pleasant to his feelings, and the reasons of which he cannot fully appreciate. Yea, there may be cases in which he may even be constrained to borrow from a domestic or neighbour, who has none of his expectancy.—And Christians must not reckon that their present indulgences will equal their future reversions. They are now under a course of discipline, in which they must exercise self-denial, and appear less favoured than many around them. But they rejoice in hope—and not only so—but, as the heir has something more from his estate than the prospect of it; as he has education and attendance becoming his rank; and remittances, to enable him to live, answerable to his destination: so Christians have now supplies from their riches in glory; and are training up, under a Divine teacher, for the sublime spheres they are

to fill; and their ministering spirits do always behold the face of our heavenly Father.

And what is *the deportment that becomes these heirs?*—It ought to be ennobled. Holiness is the true dignity of the soul; and sin, its vilest degradation. They are, therefore, to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them"—And, oh! the infinite delicacy of the Gospel!—they are to "abstain from the very appearance of evil."—It ought to be humble and grateful. They were, by nature, only children of wrath. If their relation is glorious, it is derived entirely from grace. There were difficulties in the way of their adoption, which God alone could remove—"I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage?" But he removed these obstacles by the sacrifice of his own Son, and the renovation of his own Spirit; and, poor and vile as they were, he raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifted the needy from the dunghill, to set them with princes, even the princes of his people.—It ought to be very cheerful and happy.

"A hope so much Divine,
"May trials well endure."

But so inferior are natural things to spiritual, that, when the one are applied to the illustration of the other, they teach us as much by contrast as by comparison—What, then, *is the difference between these* and earthly heirs!—In other cases, the inheritance is diminished by the numbers of co-heirs. Here, the multitude of partakers, instead of injuring, increases the blessedness of each possessor.—In other cases, the father dies before the child inherits. Here, the Father never dies.—In other cases, the heir, by dying, loses his inheritance. Here, he gains it by dying—it is then he comes of age.—In other cases, an estate passes from hand to hand. Here, is no suc-

cession—it is our heritage for ever—"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

AUG. 28.—"*Iniquities prevail against me—as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.*"
Psalm lxv. 3.

THIS is the language of complaint and of triumph. It was uttered by a Jew; but every Christian can make it his own. For as, in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man, to man, in every age, and under every dispensation.

As to the complaint, there are two ways in which iniquities may prevail against the Christian. The first is in the growing sense of his guilt. This may be occasioned by afflictions, which bring our sins to remembrance; or by any thing that increases self-knowledge; for this must always shew us more of our unworthiness and depravity. Suppose a man in a dungeon, abounding with noxious reptiles. While all is dark there, he sees none of them; but, as the light dawns, he begins to see them; and, as the light increases, he sees more of them. The light seems to bring them, and to multiply them; but it only discovers what was there before. Some pray that God would shew them all the corruptions of their heart; but this would probably drive them into distraction or despair. They could not bear the whole disclosure, especially at first; and therefore they are made sensible of them by little and little.

The second is in the power of their acting. This prevalence cannot be entire; for sin shall not have dominion over them: but it may be occasional and partial. An enemy may make a temporary irruption, and do injury, though he may be soon expelled

again. In a war, checks and discomfitures are not incompatible with general and final success; as we see in the history of the Romans. The Israelites were repulsed at Ai; but they returned to the assault, with more caution and wisdom, and succeeded. And thus, whatever advantages the foe may gain *against* Christians, the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet, shortly. David does not say, Iniquities prevail *with* me; but *against* me. As to many, they prevail with them. *They* drink in iniquity, as the ox drinketh in water. *They* draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope. But a Christian is made willing in the day of God's power; and therefore can say, "To will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. When I *would* do good, evil is present with me." Ahab is said to have sold himself to work wickedness. But it is otherwise with a poor slave in Africa. He is kidnapped, or taken by force, and disposed of to some demon-trafficker in flesh and blood—He resists—and weeps—but they prevail *against* him. And says Paul, I do not sell myself, but I am sold under sin—So then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me—O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me! Poison in a serpent never produces sickness; but it does in a man: it is natural to the one, but not to the other. Sin does not distress the sinner; but it offends, beyond every thing else, the renewed mind.

The words are broken and abrupt: but when the Church adds—"As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away;" they are, assuredly, the triumph of faith, after a plunge of distress, and a pause of thoughtfulness. There are two ways, according to the Scripture, in which God purges our transgressions; and they always go together. The one is, by pardoning mercy. Thus David prays—"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Hide thy face

from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." Thus the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. And they that believe on him are justified from all things.

The other is, by sanctifying grace. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." And this is as much the work of God as the former. He subdues our iniquities, as well as forgives them. He not only ordains peace for us, but works all our works in us.

The Christian is *persuaded* of this gracious deliverance; and therefore expresses himself with confidence And a foundation is laid for this confidence; and such a firm and scriptural foundation, as that he may feel himself perfectly safe in the midst of danger; and, under the deepest sense of his desert, joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the atonement; and, with regard to all the conflicts of indwelling sin, take courage, and sing—"I shall not die, but live; and declare the works of the Lord.

'My spirit holds perpetual war,
'And wrestles and complains;
'But views the happy moment near
'That shall dissolve its chains.

'Cheerful in death I close my eyes,
'To part with every lust;
'And charge my flesh, whene'er it rise,
'To leave them in the dust.'"

AUG. 29.—"*So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" Gal. iii. 9.

THE outward distinctions of life, awaken the envy of some, and gender discontents in others. And

yet how little depends upon them! All that is essential to the real welfare, and chief happiness of man, lies open to all who choose to avail themselves of it. All cannot become scholars; but all may be made wise unto salvation. All cannot acquire wealth; but all may gain the unsearchable riches of Christ. All cannot walk upon the high places of the earth; but all may be great in the sight of the Lord.—Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, was considered the most dignified and indulged of the human race: yet every Christian, however poor and despised, stands related to this extraordinary character, and is blessed with him—"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." And how was he blessed?

He was *justified*. And blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. For him, there is no wrath to come; no sting in death; no curse in affliction. But came this blessedness upon Abraham only? "What saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." So then they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham—And are all authorized to say, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

—Abraham was called the *friend of God*—and was called so by God himself: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." If Eusebius held it such

privilege to be the friend of Pamphilus: if Lord rookes so gloried in the distinction, as to have it ıscribed upon his tomb—

"Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney"—

Vhat was the honour of Abraham, in being acknow-dged the friend of God? Yet such honour have all ıe saints. They are not only pardoned, but admitted) intimacy. They walk with God. His secret is ith them; and he shews them his covenant. In ll their afflictions, he is afflicted. He loveth at all mes: and will never leave nor forsake them. "So ıen they which be of faith are blessed with faithful braham."

— Abraham, also, was blessed with *usefulness*. I will bless thee," says God, "and make thee a lessing." This was done, not only in the descent f the Messiah from him, in whom all the families f the earth were to be blessed eventually; but y his prayers, and instructions, and example, and ıertions, and influence wherever he came. Thus lso are all believers blessed. Not one of them is seless. They are disposed to do good; and their esire is gratified. They are qualified to do good; ıd, as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they erve their generation by his will. They are the lt of the earth, to preserve; the light of the world,) inform; and a dew from the Lord, and as showers pon the grass, to cool, and refresh, and revive, and rtilize—"I will save you, and ye shall be a blessing."

— Abraham was *divinely protected:* and God ıid to him, "I am thy shield." "I will bless him ıat blesseth thee; and I will curse him that curseth ıee." He preserved him in his going out and)ming in. He covered his head in the day of battle, hen he rescued his kinsman, Lot. He suffered) man to do him wrong; yea, he reproved kings r his sake, saying, Touch not mine anointed,

and do my prophet no harm. And thus, though many rise up against believers, and they feel themselves to be perfect weakness; their defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart. He is their refuge and strength; a very present and all-sufficient help in trouble. They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation: therefore they need not fear what their enemies can do unto them.

— Abraham had not only a divine protection, but an *infinite portion:* "I am," says God, not only "thy shield," but "thy exceeding great reward!" This necessarily includes what God was to do for him beyond the grave. It could not have been fulfilled in this life. When we find him, a few years only after this assurance, sickening and dying, and laid in the cave of Machpelah; we are constrained to ask, Is this the reward, the great, the exceeding great reward, consisting, so to speak, of God himself? Ages after this, God said to Moses, at the bush, I *am*—not I was—but, I *am* the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The relation, therefore, remained; for "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." They were then living, as to their spirits; and would as certainly live, as to their bodies, in the resurrection, as if it had already taken place. Hence the reasoning of the Apostle: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Our Saviour also allowed him to be in glory; and even represented heaven by a union and intimacy

with him: "The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Well, and nothing less than this is the glad and glorious destination of every believer. For they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The grand inquiry therefore is—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" For we have access only by *faith* into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

For they that are not of faith are cursed with—the faithless nobleman, to whom it was denounced, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not taste of it." And with the faithless Jews, whose carcasses fell in the Wilderness; and who "could not enter in because of unbelief." And "with hypocrites and unbelievers, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

AUG. 30.—"*Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*" 1 Peter i. 17.

FROM these words, I might consider the nature of the Christian life—which is *a sojourning here:* and also—the *time* appointed for it. But let me rather reflect upon the *manner* in which I am to pass the one, in accomplishing the other—"Pass the time of your sojourning here *in fear.*" This cannot intend every kind of fear, without making the Scripture inconsistent with itself: for how often does it forbid fear!

We must not, therefore, give way to apprehensions of any thing we may suffer from our fellow-creatures, in following the path of duty. Here we should boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me." "Fear not," says the Saviour—mentioning the extremest case—

"Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." And this, Paul exemplified: "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." When Peter and John were threatened, if they spake any more in the Name of Jesus, they replied, We have nothing to do with consequences: we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard: we ought to obey God rather than man: and he has commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature. So should it be with us. We are not, indeed, to run into sufferings for our religion; but we can never go on well in divine things, till we are delivered from the fear of man that bringeth a snare. What is it, but this, that produces so many concealments, and defections, and inconsistencies, in those who know what is right, and are incited by their convictions; but have not courage enough to resolve and proceed? Perfect love casteth out this fear; and is strong as death.

We are equally to shun a distrustfulness of God's word. This fear is at once the most dishonourable to God, and injurious to our own souls. It robs us of comfort, and lays open the mind to temptation; as we see in Abraham, who, in a moment of unbelief, prevaricated, and debased and exposed himself in Gerar. Having the assurance of God in any case, we should feel no uncertainty as to the result—it must be accomplished—we have something firmer than the earth and the heavens to rely upon. But we may fear, not—whether we shall perish in the way everlasting; but whether we are in it. Not—whether the promise will fail; but whether we are the heirs of promise: as the Apostle even admonishes—"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." This is a case too important to be taken for granted. The consequences of mistake are remediless; and the possibility, yea,

he probability of it, is great. It will, therefore, e better to err rather on the side of solicitude, than f security.

A servile fear, too, is not to be cherished. This nay, indeed, precede something better: but if our ear of God begins with the judge, it must end with he father. It argues a very low degree of religion, vhen a man can only be held to duty, like the slave, y the dread of the lash. We have not, says the Apostle, received the spirit of bondage again to fear, ut the Spirit of adoption. The slave is converted into he child: and God spares him as a man spareth his wn son that serveth him.

But there is a proper and all-important fear, vhich God has engaged to put into the hearts of is people, that they may not depart from him—It s a fear of respect, and esteem, and gratitude. It egards not only God's greatness, but his goodness. There is, therefore, nothing irksome in it. It is ompatible with consolation and joy: and the first Christians walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the omfort of the Holy Ghost. It is, in reality, the ame with affection—the love which an inferior bears o a superior—the love of a dutiful child to a parent; r of a good servant to a master; or of a thankful lependent to a benefactor. This shews itself much n a way of reverence, and obedience, and attention. Hence, the more I love God, the more I shall fear im; the more I shall dread to offend him; the more shall study to please him; the more I shall ask, ord, what wilt thou have me to do? the more I shall ray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditaion of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, ny Strength and my Redeemer."

There is, also, a fear of caution, in which it beomes us to live—This regards sin. Sin is the reatest evil to which we can be exposed. And we nay see enough in the case of David to make even good man stand in dread of it. For though God

put away his sin, as to its future penalty, yet it was ever before him in the sufferings it occasioned. The sword never departed from his house. He was filled with dread of divine abandonment. He was deprived of his peace and joy. His bones were broken; and his tongue was struck dumb. And a holy God will always cause the backslidings, even of his own people, to reprove them, and make them know that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against him. He will becloud their hope, and destroy their comfort, and perhaps quarter troubles upon them for life. Reputation, which is the produce of years, may be ruined in a moment; and the effect of a thousand good actions may be lost, by one evil deed. He who has befriended religion, may cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and become a judgment on the whole neighbourhood in which he dwells.

And are *we* in no danger of this? Read the Scriptures. See the falls of good men; and men eminently good. Have not we a subtle and active enemy always at hand? Have we not a wicked world without us? and an evil heart within us? Owing to our remaining depravity, are we not liable to be ensnared by every thing we come in contact with, however harmless in itself? If we *think* caution unnecessary, we have the *greatest* need of it: for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear.

If we would maintain this frame of mind, let us walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise. Let us not be anxious to rise in the world, and gain the affluence which will require a moral miracle to preserve us. "He that makes *haste* to be rich, shall not be innocent." "They that *will* be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and

perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

— Let us keep our mouth with a bridle. In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin.

— Let us not run into perils, uncalled of God—We are only authorized to look for his protection when we are brought into them in the discharge of duty. And, while we watch, let us also constantly pray—"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

"BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT FEARETH ALWAYS."

AUG. 31.—"*I will betroth thee unto me for ever.*" Hosea ii. 19.

How well is it said of Christians, "Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." They are not only pardoned, but employed in his service. They are not only reconciled, but admitted into friendship and intimacy. Yea, they are not only friends and favourites, but they are his bride—"I will betroth thee unto me"—And observe the permanency of the relation: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

"Permanency," says the Poet, "adds bliss to bliss." How is every possession and enjoyment without it, impaired in value! Yea, the more important any acquisition be, and the more necessary we feel it to our happiness; the more alive are we to apprehension of danger; the more averse are we to absence; the more painful is separation; the more intolerable is the thought of loss.

Yet, to whatever we are attached here, do we not set our "hearts on that which is not"? It is said, the

Jews, in their nuptial ceremony, always threw a glass upon the ground, to signify, that the union then forming was as frail as the emblem was brittle. Without the figure, if we are wise, there is enough to remind us of the fact: and well does the Apostle reason, when he says, "Brethren, the time is short; it remains, therefore, that they who have wives be as though they had none."

We take each other—"till death us do part." And the relation *is* terminated by death—not the death of *both*—but the death of *either*. What then is the tenure of the treasure? What is our life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Has God given you a companion in the days of your vanity? Rejoice; but rejoice with trembling. Perhaps, already the wife has been called to give up "the guide of her youth;" or the husband, "the desire of his eyes;" with whom they once took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company!

But Christians can never be in a widowed state. They can never lose their defence, their glory, their joy. There is nothing precarious in the transactions of God with his people. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, and nothing can be taken from it." How delightful in a world of changes to know that *He* changeth not, and therefore that we shall not be consumed. Every thing seems reeling around me, and sinking beneath my feet: but I have hold of something firmer than the heavens and the earth—the word, the oath, of eternal Faithfulness and Truth. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that

they shall not depart from me." I have had many a persuasion which has failed me, because, though the confidence was strong, the foundation was weak. But here the full assurance of faith can never do justice to the certainty of the event. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

SEPTEMBER 1.—"*The word of life.*" Phil. ii. 16.

THIS is a representation of the Gospel; and it well deserves our notice. All life is valuable; but there are several kinds of it, rising above each other. There is vegetable life—this is superior to mere matter; as a tree is more excellent than a stone. There is animal life—this is superior to vegetable; as a bird excels a tree. There is rational life—this is superior to animal; as a man excels a bird: for man was made a little lower only than the angels; there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. Yet there is a life superior to rational—It is called the life of God; a life from which we are naturally alienated; but to which all the subjects of divine grace are restored by the Saviour, who came, not only that we might have life, but have it more abundantly. It will be completed in heaven; but it is begun here. The case is this. Man, by transgression, is dead in *state;* for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. He is also dead in *disposition*—or, as the Apostle expresses it, dead in trespasses and sins. But the Christian is passed from death unto life—He is no longer exposed to condemnation, for he is

justified by faith, and has peace with God. And he is no longer under the power of moral death; for he is quickened, and made to walk in newness of life. "I compare," says he, "my present with my former experience. I was once dead to divine things, for they no more impressed me than sensible things affect a dead corpse. But now, for the very same reason, I hope I am alive; for these very things *do* affect me; *do* interest me: *do* excite in me hope and fear. I am susceptible of spiritual joy and sorrow. I live, for I breathe the breath of prayer. I feel the pulse of sacred passions—I love, and I hate. I have appetite—for I hunger and thirst after righteousness. I walk, and I work—and though all my efforts betray weakness, they evince life."

But what will this life be, when there shall be no more death—when the body shall partake of the immortality of the soul—when both shall be glorified together—in a perpetual duration of knowledge, purity, friendship, riches, and glory—This is life eternal!

Now the Gospel is called, the word of this life; and it has four relations to it.—A relation of *discovery*—for it reveals the reality and excellency of this life; the way in which it is obtained; the source from which it flows; and every particle of information we have concerning it.—A relation of *conveyance*—for it communicates; it produces this life.—A relation of *support*—for it is the means, not only of begetting this life, but of maintaining and increasing it. Therefore it is considered as its food; adapted to all stages of its being—milk, if we are babes; strong meat, if we are men.—A relation of *order*—it is the rule by which this life is governed, as to doctrine, worship, experience, exertion. To this rule all our religion must be brought: and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

SEPT. 2.—"*Holding forth the word of life.*" Phil. ii. 16.

THE Apostles did this supernaturally. They received their commission immediately from God; and were preserved from all mistakes in delivering his counsel; and could work miracles in confirmation and in defence of it. Ministers do this officially. They pretend to no original communications from God, no new discoveries—they derive what they publish from the Scriptures; and they call upon you to prove whether these things are so. Yet their preaching is a divine ordinance—a work which an angel might covet; the simple design of which is, to hold forth the word of life.

But there are many ways of doing this, common to all Christians; and they are the persons the Apostle here addresses. They may hold it forth by their *profession*. This is not to be considered as a substitute for experience, but as flowing from it. Experience is a secret thing between God and their own souls: but their religion is to be visible, as well as real—They that are in darkness are to shew themselves: and we are to confess with the mouth, as well as to believe with the heart, unto salvation. They may hold it forth by *example*—And this must evince the sincerity, and conduce to the efficacy, of your profession. You are required to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; and to constrain others, by your good works which they behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation. Nothing is so eloquent as the silence of a holy, consistent, and lovely life. Actions speak louder than words; and by these you can cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, or adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. It is thus *all* can be "holders forth," whatever be their condition, and without leaving their place and station. This is the way in which servants are to preach to their masters and mistresses,

and children to their parents—Indeed, with regard to all of us,

> "*Thus* shall we best proclaim aloud
> "The honours of our Saviour God;
> "When the salvation reigns within,
> "And grace subdues the pow'r of sin."

This is not, however, to hinder express *exertions*. By these, when the life is in accordance with them, much may be often done. There are few so situated and limited, as not to have some opportunities and influences by which they may be useful, and in a much greater degree than they are aware of, if they will seize them with simplicity, and diligence, and prayer. The talents of men are various; but the servant who has only one, will be condemned if he wraps it up in a napkin. When we cannot do much individually, we can do something by joining with others, and recommending and aiding those institutions which aim at the diffusion of the cause of Christ. We cannot translate the Scriptures into other tongues; but we can circulate them. We are not at liberty to go abroad ourselves; but we can be fellow-helpers to the truth, by contributing to missions. Silver and gold we have none; but we can apply to those who have. We are not donors; but we can be collectors.

What should induce us to hold forth the word of life? Interest. The regard we pay to the Gospel, will bless ourselves; for, like its Author, it says, Them that honour me, I will honour. We seldom labour in vain in this work; but if our efforts should prove successless, in some way or other they will return into our own bosom. The most respected, and the most happy Christians, are the unselfish, the active, the fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Benevolence. The Gospel is not only wonderful, but all-important—It is the Gospel of our salvation. It is the bread, the water of life. For dying souls,

it is the only remedy. It has done more already for even the public welfare of nations than all the civil institutions of men: and by this alone will the wilderness and solitary place be made glad, and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

Piety. It is thus God's perfections are displayed. It is thus his enemies are to be diminished, and his subjects increased. It is thus his kingdom comes. —And what claims has he not upon us for our service? Whose are we? Who bought us with a price?

Our relation in the Church. Why have we joined ourselves to a religious society, and placed ourselves under the ministry of the Word? Is it only to commune together in privilege, or also to co-operate together in usefulness? Holding forth the word of life, says the text—"That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain."

SEPT. 3.—"*Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.*" 1 Sam. iii. 9.

THIS shews a temper of mind which we should feel on every occasion—But what does He say to us now we are leaving home for a season; and shall in a peculiar sense be for a while strangers and pilgrims on earth?

He requires us, in this excursion, to look to our motives. Surely sin is out of the question. What a dreadful thing would it be to go from home to get opportunities to commit iniquity, without danger of observation and discovery! To such, it might well be said, This journey shall not be to thine honour. But the object is lawful, if it be business; if it be friendship; if it be relative affection; if it

be health; if it be recreation within proper bounds, and with a view to prepare for future application.

He requires us to move in a dependence on his providence. The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. In his hand, our breath is; and his, are all our ways. There are many who live without God in the world. James describes the presumption of such an individual in the thought of a journey, and a project—"Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." Paul speaks of a prosperous journey, by the will of God. Nothing can be done without his permission and blessing. He can set every thing against us; or make every thing conduce to our profit. He can spread a gloom over the fairest scenes of Nature; or he can comfort us on every side. The elements are his. He preserveth man and beast. Let us remember our entire reliance upon him; and hear him at this moment saying, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

He requires, that wherever we go, we should maintain the consistency of our character. This does not forbid the exercise of prudence. We are even commanded to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves; and to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; and especially to walk in wisdom towards them that are without. But this does not require the surrender of principle; nor even the concealment of it. We are not to be ashamed of the Saviour, and of his words; but confess him before men. If we become all things to all men,

it must be in things sinless and indifferent. If we please our neighbour, it must be for his good to edification. If we yield, and "trim our way," and act unbecoming our profession; we shall not only lose the benefit of reproving, convincing, and impressing others, by a practical testimony; but procure for ourselves contempt, instead of esteem. For those who understand not our experience, can comprehend our duty; and those who do not admire piety, despise inconsistency.

He therefore requires us to seize and to seek opportunities of usefulness. All cannot act in the same way. Our stations and abilities differ: and we are not to suffer our good to be evil spoken of. But let us beware of indecision and excuse. "He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap." Who may not be a blessing in every place in which he is found? Who can tell the influence, immediate or remote, of a proper and lovely example? of a word fitly spoken? of a book lent, or a tract given? of a *wise* and *moral* distribution of alms?—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Let us never think any of our possessions or endowments our own. They are talents; and, "as every man hath received the gift, even so let us minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Many of our opportunities are already gone; and they are gone for ever. How many remain, we know not; but they are few, and uncertain. Let us awake, and resemble him who went about doing good; and who said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

He requires that we should not be careless and inattentive observers of his works. The works of the Lord are great, in number and in quality; and

are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. And I will, says God, that thou magnify his works which men behold. We can see them every where; but, as we move from one place to another, we perceive them in greater variety. And when, from an inland situation, we reach the watery world, we behold his wonders in the deep. The sea is his; and he made it; and, with all its immensity, holds it in the hollow of his hand. What wisdom do we recognize in the salineness of the fluid; and in the ebbing and flowing of the tide! What power appears in raising, and in calming the billows; and in giving to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; saying, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed!—And we should observe his works, not only as objects of curiosity and wonder, but as excitements to admiration and praise. We should regard them not as naturalists and philosophers, but with the views and feelings of Christians.

He requires that we should find in all we see confirmations of our faith in his word. The Scripture tells us of the flood by which the ungodly world was destroyed, and the earth convulsed and torn—And what indications of this awful catastrophe do we often meet with! The Scripture tells us, that, though God made man upright, he sought out many inventions: and that we are gone astray; there is none righteous, no not one—And where can we go and not discern this? "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." And in the succession of the seasons we see this pledge redeemed. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works—and we have but to open our eyes, and we see him opening his hand, and satisfying the desires of every living thing.

He requires, that in our progress and our return, we should be thankful. And how much is there to

raken our gratitude! That we have not only been pplied and supported: but have had so many greeable prospects, and entertainments, and changes -that we have b en preserved in our going out, nd our coming in—that we have been secured from icked and unreasonable men—that no accident has ilt our life upon the ground, or bruised a limb f our body—that our property has been secured, s well as our persons and health—that no plague as come nigh our dwelling—and that we know also at our tabernacle is in peace! Bless the Lord, O ur souls; and, all that is within us, bless his holy ame!

He requires that we should realize life itself as nly a journey, and think of getting home. We re but strangers and sojourners here, as were all ur fathers. There is none abiding. "Lord, make ne to know mine end, and the measure of my days, hat it is; that I may know how frail I am." "So each us to number our days, that we may apply our earts unto wisdom."

SEPT. 4.—"*Peace I leave with you.*" John xiv. 27.

WE know whose words these are—And who was ever so qualified and authorised to speak of peace as he? He is called the Prince of Peace. His ministers are the messengers of peace. His word is the Gospel of peace. His way is the path of peace. An angel announced peace at his birth; and he himself bequeathed peace at his death—"Peace I leave with you."

For we may consider the words, so to speak, as a part of his last will and testament. Lands, and

houses, and goods, and silver, and gold, he had none to leave. But such as he had he disposed of in the form and manner following. That is to say; his soul to God—Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit. His body, to the envy and malice of his enemies—to be buffeted, and scourged, and crucified. His wearing-apparel, to the soldiers—who divided his garments among them, and for his vesture cast lots. His widowed mother, to the care of John—who, from that hour, took her unto his own home. But what had his disciples all this time? Has he forgotten them? No—"Peace I leave with you."

But why does he bestow it upon them in a way of legacy? First; to make it the dearer. They would thus prize this boon—It was the remembrance of their dying Lord and Saviour. Any thing left us by a dying friend, if it be only a book, or a ring, is esteemed and valued. Secondly; to render it the surer. If it be but a man's testament, yet, if it be confirmed, no man can disannul it. But here every thing concurs to establish confidence. The will is written, witnessed, and sealed. And the testator dies: for a testament is of no force while the testator liveth. And the executor is true and honest, and will see all punctually fulfilled—this is the Holy Ghost, which is to glorify him, by taking of his, and shewing it unto them.

This bestowment was much more than they deserved. They had always been dull scholars; and sadly repaid the labours he had expended upon them. They had been very defective servants; and, only a few hours before, had been disputing among themselves which of them should be the greatest. And now, as his suffering drew near, instead of shewing themselves his sympathising friends, they were all going to forsake him, and flee—yet, loving his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

"Happy disciples, to be thus remembered, honoured, and enriched!" you are ready to exclaim—"how we

envy you?" But these words were not to be confined to them. They were personally to enjoy the privilege; and they were immediately addressed—But, in receiving this assurance, they stood as the representatives of all his people, to the end of time—And you, even you, if you love and follow him, are as much included in the bequeathment, as if you were mentioned by name. Witness his following intercession—"Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."

SEPT. 5.—"*I will strengthen them in the Lord.*" Zech. x. 12.

THIS is the very assurance our hearts want, as we think of ourselves, and survey the duties and trials of the Christian life. And we cannot too confidently rely on the accomplishment of it; for it comes from the lips of Faithfulness and Truth. But we may err, as to the manner in which it is to be fulfilled; and therefore our expectation is to be regulated and qualified accordingly.

Let me observe, then, that the fulfilment of the promise, as long as we are here, will not exempt us from all cause of complaint. It will keep us in our work; but not cause us to cease from our labour. It secures us assistance in our conflict; but the war lasts for life. However strong our faith, and firm our hope, and long-suffering, unto all joyfulness, our patience; we shall still be sensible, and

the more sensible too, of resistance, deficiency, defilement; and still acknowledge that, when we would do good, evil is present with us—and groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This impartation of strength will also be seasonable, and proportioned to the exigencies of our condition—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." What we are to look for is, not grace for imaginary purposes, but for real; not grace for future difficulties, but present; or, as the Apostle has it, grace to "help in time of need." It does not, therefore, follow, that what is formidable in the prospect, may be so in the event. You may fear death while living, and not fear it at last. "Is this," said Dr. Goodwin, "Is *this* dying? Is this the enemy that dismayed me so long—now appearing so harmless—and even pleasant?"

These supplies of strength are to be sought after and expected in God's own way; that is, in the use of the means which he has ordained. So his Word deals with our hope. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint."

And have I not found it so? In the day when I cried, has he not answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul? Have I not kneeled down with a contracted, and risen up with an enlarged, heart? When I have read his Word, hath he not thereby quickened me? Have I not found him, in his palaces, for a refuge? Has he not sent me

elp from the Sanctuary, and strengthened me out f Zion?

— How foolish, then, to avoid religious exercises, hen I am not in a proper, and spiritual, and lively ame! *The means of grace* are surely, then, the ost necessary: as fire is the most needful when e are cold; and excitement, when we are dull.

It is only a part of the truth, that we are to ay *with* the Spirit—we are also to pray *for* it. Vitness the language of the Saviour—"If ye then, eing evil, know how to give good gifts unto your hildren; how much more shall your heavenly Father ive the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Witness he example of the Church—"Awake, O north wind, nd come, thou south. Blow upon thy garden, that he spices thereof may flow out."

SEPT. 6.—"*He found him in a desert land, and the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, e instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.*" Deut. xxxii. 10.

AND will not all this apply, O Christian! to thee, as ell as to Israel?

Will not the *finding*? "He found them in a desert nd, in a waste howling wilderness." And where did e find you? What was your natural state? What as the world lying in wickedness? What was the arth, as filled, from the effects of sin, with vanity and exation of spirit? There he found you: not you him —To his Name give glory, for the mercy and the ruth's sake. You did indeed find him: but how? "I m found of them that sought me not—I am sought f them that asked not for me." You did choose him: ut as the cause or consequence of his choice? Hear is own language—"Ye have not chosen me, but

I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Who can refuse to acknowledge, We love him, because he first loved us?

— Will not the *leading?* "He led them about." There was no road, and much depended upon their movements. He therefore became their conductor— and we know how he did this. It was by a fiery cloudy pillar. As this advanced, they removed. As this turned to the right or the left, they turned also. As this paused, they remained. Thus they were freed from all anxiety. The distance they had to go was not great in itself. Jacob's sons, with their asses, soon passed and re-passed between Egypt and Canaan. And the Israelites quickly reached Kadesh-barnea, which was not far from Jordan; but they were turned back. And if you consult a map, and observe their winding marches, you will see the propriety of the expression, He led them about. And has he not thus led you? You knew, the way of man is not in himself. You cried unto the Lord, and said, Lead me in thy truth, and guide me, for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day. And he said, I will lead thee and guide thee, and instruct thee with mine eye. And has he ever abandoned you? What mistakes has he prevented! How often has he hedged up your path, to keep you from going astray! From how many embarrassments, the effect of your acting without him, has he extricated you! He has always led you in the right way; but it has often been a trying one; and such as you could not have foreseen or conjectured. In your temporal affairs he has perhaps checked you, and turned you back— you have had life to begin again: and to seek other openings and labours. And as to your spiritual experience, instead of gaining more of the assurance of hope, doubts and fears have invaded you; and instead of victory over your enemies, you have been led to see

and feel more of the evil of your hearts—while you have often asked, If I am his, why am I thus? Yet all this has fulfilled the promise, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darknesss light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

— Will not the *teaching*? "He instructed them." They had the finest opportunities in the world to learn, cut off as they were from intercourse with the surrounding nations, and alone, with God as their preceptor. When at Horeb, they sat down at his feet, and received of his words. He gave them laws and ordinances. He sent them Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam. He taught them much by events, pleasing and painful. He shewed them in example the evil of sin, the happiness of obedience—yea, he gave them his good Spirit, says Nehemiah, to instruct them. And has he not instructed you? If you have been unprofitable learners, the fault has been your own. You have had every thing favourable in your situation; a thousand resources of information have opened around you—you have the Scriptures, the preaching of the Word, Christian intercourse, and that Spirit which is to teach you all things. Every thing that has befallen you has read you lessons. Some things you *must* have learned—that this is not your rest—the folly of trusting in your own hearts—the greatness of your unworthiness—and that it is of the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed.

— Will not the *protection*? "He kept them as the apple of his eye"—the tenderest part of the tenderest member. Did the serpents bite them? He provided a remedy, and healed them. Did enemies assail them? It was not with impunity. He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. Amalek; Sihon, king of the Amorites; and Og, king of Bashan;

found, to their peril, that he made their cause his own. Did Balaam use divination and enchantment? He owned there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. He cursed them, but the curse was turned into a blessing. In travelling, were they exposed to the sun? The Lord was their shade on their right hand. He preserved them in their going out and in their coming in—they were a people saved of the Lord. And who has kindly, tenderly, constantly, kept you? Have you had no enemies? And why have you not been a prey to their teeth? Why has not your heart turned back? nor your steps declined from his ways? *He* has holden you up. You have been kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

This is what he has done for you.

— What have you done for him?

— What are you doing?

— What do you resolve to do?

SEPT. 7.—"*The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel.*" Hosea i. 1.

WE are not informed whether he had been trained up for the holy office, or been called in a manner sudden and unlooked-for. Some of the prophets were taken at once from following their common occupations; as we see in the instances of Elisha and Amos. Others were taken—and this was more generally the case—from the schools of the prophets; where, by retirement, and prayer, and meditation, and instruction, they were gradually prepared to minister in holy things. Thus God both sanctified

the use of means, and shewed that he was not confined to them. It is the same now. Some of the most pious, eminent, and useful ministers the Churches ever possessed, have been educated for the purpose; and we ought to be thankful for such institutions; and on these, for our spiritual supplies, we must *principally* depend—But we must not limit the Holy One of Israel. He will sometimes take a man out of our rules, and give him acceptance and success. And we must receive a Bunyan, as well as an Owen—When will persons allow God to work in his own way? and learn that, because one thing is right, another need not be wrong? But Hosea was *divinely commissioned*—"The word of the Lord came unto him." "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And they could *demand* attention, in the Name of Him who sent them—"Thus saith the Lord."

— His *descent* is also remarked—He was "the son of Beeri." The Jews have a rule, that the prophet whose father is named, was the son of a prophet. But this does not always hold. Nothing is recorded of Beeri. Yet it is reasonably concluded, that unless he had been a man of some distinction, and from whom Hosea derived honour, he would not have been mentioned. And this he might have been, without possessing worldly rank and riches. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He is happily and nobly descended, who springs from those who are great in the sight of the Lord—He may well exult, and say—

> "My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
> "From loins enthron'd and rulers of the earth;
> "But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
> "The son of parents pass'd into the skies!"

Let us so live, as that our children may derive from us advantage and respect.

But the principal thing is, the *time* of his ministrations—"In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel." Now if he prophesied only from the end of Jeroboam's reign, the son of *Joash*, to the beginning of Hezekiah's, it would have been near seventy years. But he prophesied *in* the reign of both. And if we allow him a few years in each of these, and reckon up the length of the reigns between, his ministry must have been little short of eighty years; and it was probably even more. And five things may be observed from hence.

First. How very little we have of his prophesyings. Twelve short chapters, read in much less time than a modern sermon, include all that has been perpetuated of far the longest ministry on record. Some labour for posterity; and leave behind them works which will render them a blessing to future ages. Others are called more to serve their own generation, by the will of God; and are preachers, rather than writers. How useful was Whitfield, as a preacher! while his few writings have had little circulation, and rather serve to excite wonder that he was so powerful in another capacity. How useful has Hervey been, as a writer! while his preaching was without excitement, and scarcely distinguished by any effect. Some, like Doddridge, have excelled, both in the pulpit and from the press. Every servant of God has his peculiar gifts, and his appropriate sphere—"Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

Secondly. He must have begun his ministry very young. Paul forbids the ordination of a novice, lest he should be lifted up with pride. Talent is not all that is necessary for the sacred office. How necessary is the knowledge that is derived from experience! and the confidence that grows out of the trial of character! Thirty, was the age for enter-

ng on the Levitical service. And not earlier than his period, did John and Jesus commence their ublic ministry. Bnt "the word of God is not ound." Timothy was young; so young, that Paul as obliged to say, "Let no man despise thy youth." amuel was employed, while yet a child. Jeremiah as consecrated from the womb. And this was early the case with Hosea. What a privilege, what n honour, to be early dedicated to the service of God! —"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth."

Thirdly. He must have been very old before he etired from labour. Some do not resign early enough, ut stand about in the way of usefulness—The excelent Cornelius Winter often prayed to be preserved rom this error. Indeed, few can set well, and say of successor, with proper feelings, "I must decrease, ut he must increase." Others resign too soon. hey would retire upon a pension, before they are isabled in the holy war. A minister may want he sprightliness and vigour of youth, and yet have he ripeness and richness of age; and the fruit may rop without much hard shaking. Some nobly fall t their post—sword in hand—faithful unto death—nd, with the crown of life, obtain the commendation, Thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

Fourthly. He must have passed through a vast ariety of condition. He lived in the reign of one ood king, and of four bad ones. He saw peace, nd much war. He saw plenty, and, more than nce, scarceness and famine. He saw a few partial evivals of religion; but witnessed general and conant wickedness. How many of his relations, iends, and pious connexions, had fallen! How lonely ust he have felt! How changed his views! How onvinced must he have been, that all below is vanity nd vexation of spirit!—while, yet, God was the trength of his heart, and his portion for ever. low much he knew of what was doing in other ountries, we cannot determine. But within the

compass of his ministry lived Lycurgus, the famous Lacedæmonian legislator; and Hesiod, the Greek poet; and Rome was begun to be built.

Finally. A man of God may labour long, and do very little good. The people he addressed not only continued wicked, but waxed worse and worse: and the captivity he had threatened, he lived to see commenced. He certainly saw a part of Israel carried away captive, by Tiglath Pileser; and probably the entire destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes, by Salmanezer. This must have been very painful. But it did not slacken his efforts. We are not answerable for our success. If we lose our labour, we shall not lose our reward. A greater than all said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

SEPT. 8.—"*Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering?*" Rom. ii. 4.

ONE of the ways in which God addresses us, in his Word, is expostulation. To expostulate is to accuse before an open rupture. It is the lingering of friendship, offended indeed, but unwilling to abandon its object without further trial. It is anger blended with kindness: it is chiding, accompanied with entreaty. —This is a very pleasing view of the Supreme Being, and induces us to exclaim, Lord, what is man, that *thou* art mindful of him; or the son of man, that *thou* visitest him? By the transgression of his law, we reduced ourselves to ruin. He remembered us in our low estate; and provided for our deliverance. The blessing is placed before us, and within our reach—But we disregard it; and contemn the

aviour, as well as the Ruler. Thus we deserve that is wrath should come upon us. Yet, before he pro- ounces sentence, he sends for us into his presence; nd reasons with us—that being unable to defend ur conduct, we may acknowledge, by our silence, hat we have acted a part that leaves us without xcuse, and without hope—"Despisest thou the iches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long- uffering?"

God is good to all; and the Apostle speaks of 'the riches of his goodness." These riches appear n numberless displays.—But he adds—"and for- earance, and longsuffering;" to induce us to con- ider the latter, as the proof of the former.

To see then the riches of his goodness, let us ontemplate his forbearance and longsuffering. Every hing in God enhances his patience.—His *greatness* nhances it. We are more affected with an affront rom an equal, than from a superior; and more from n inferior than from an equal. How does the mas- er resent an offence from his slave? or a king from , subject? But all comparison fails between God nd us. He is the maker of all things, and all nations efore him are as nothing. This is the Being insulted. And who is the offender? A grovelling worm upon dunghill—and yet he bears with us.—His *wisdom* nhances it. We cannot be affected with affronts f which we are ignorant. How would some be nraged if they knew only what is *said* of them by ome of their "dear five hundred friends;" how they urn them into ridicule before they have well left heir house; and what freedoms they take with their haracter, and their conduct, in almost every com- any. But none of our offences are secret from od. He hears all—sees all—and knows perfectly very imagination of the thoughts of our heart—And et he bears with us.—His *holiness* enhances it. If we do not think and feel a thing to be an affront, here is no virtue, for there is no difficulty, in en-

during it. The trial is when it touches us to the quick, in some most valued interest. But sin is exceeding sinful. By nothing does God deem himself so dishonoured. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It is the abominable thing which his soul hates—And yet he bears with us.—His *power* enhances it. Why do we put up with a thousand wrongs? We know them, and feel them; but we reluctantly submit, because we have no way to punish them. Why are not sinners destroyed? Moses, when he had provoked the Egyptians, saved himself by flight. But whither can we go from God's presence, or flee from his Spirit? Some, when they have provoked resentment, have defied it, and successfully too. But who ever hardened himself against God, and prospered? His look is death—And yet he bears with us.—His *bounty* enhances it. We complain peculiarly of an injury or an insult, from one who is much indebted to us. From another, we say, we could have borne; but he is viler than the brute: for the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. We are under infinite obligations to the God we provoke. In him we have lived, and moved, and had our being. His table has fed us; his wardrobe has clothed us; his sun has warmed us. And this is not all. His kindness continues, notwithstanding all our ingratitude. And he not only spares us, but in every way indulges us. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon us.

Yet are these riches of his goodness "despised."—Despised by *inconsideration*. We treat them as unworthy of our notice. They do not occupy our thoughts, or our speech.—Despised by *disobedience*. We resist their design, which is, to lead us to repentance. God calls, but we will not answer. He knocks, but we refuse to open—Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?—Despised by *perversion*. We turn them into instruments of rebellion:

and make them the very means of increasing our impenitency. If we thought God would strike us into hell the next sin we committed, it would not be committed: but since he is too kind to do this, we are induced to offend him. We are evil, because he is good.

How *unreasonable* is this! How *vile* is this contempt! How *shameful!* If an individual was to behave towards a fellow-creature as men are continually acting towards the blessed God, no one could notice him but with astonishment and disgrace. Yet we talk of the dignity of human nature! or contend that it is but slightly injured by the Fall!

— And how *dangerous!* How *ruinous* is this contempt! It is true, God is merciful and gracious; but he will by no means spare the guilty. Nothing equals the penalty of the Gospel—it is the savour of *death unto death.*

SEPT. 9.—"*They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest.*" Isaiah ix. 3.

THREE circumstances are here mentioned. They *joy.* They joy *before thee.* They joy before thee, *according to the joy in harvest.* Each of these will supply an interesting and useful meditation.

THEY JOY.

Among the many mistakes entertained concerning religion, no one is more common than the notion, that it prescribes a forced, gloomy, melancholy course; engaged in which, we must bid adieu to every thing like pleasure. And nothing can be more injurious than this notion: for men will naturally turn from religion, while they view it as the enemy of their

happiness. But nothing is so unfounded and false as this opinion. Let us take it to three tribunals.

Let us bring it to the bar of *reason*. It must be allowed that God is able to make us happy or miserable. And, if so—is it likely that he will suffer those who hate and oppose him to be happy? and those who love and try to please him to be miserable? What a notion of the Supreme Being would this imply! And what could equally blaspheme his character?—And has a hope, that my sins are pardoned; that God is my Father; that Providence is my guide; that Death is my friend; and that Heaven is my portion; a tendency to inspire me with sadness, or with joy? And which is most adapted to make me wretched or comfortable within? Malice, or benevolence? Passion, or meekness? Pride, or humility? Envy, or complacency? Anxiety, or confidence?—Distant things do not sufficiently impress us. We need something immediate. Our propensity to present gratification is powerful. And must not religion meet this state of feeling, and provide for it? Thirsty as man is, if there be no pure stream at hand, will he not kneel down to the filthy puddle? What is to preserve us from being drawn away by the allurements and dissipations of the world, but our having something better to satisfy our hearts at home, and to keep us from roving?—What can sustain us in our trials, and animate us in our duties, if destitute of present consolation? The joy of the Lord is our strength. We shall soon decline a course in which we feel no interest or delight. And if we are strangers to holy pleasure, how can we impress others in favour of religion? It is by singing at their work that his servants praise their master; and prove that his yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Let us take it to the bar of *Scripture*. Read the Bible all through for this purpose. Take its commands—What are these? "Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad, ye righteous; and shout aloud for joy,

ll ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again say, rejoice."—Take its promises—What are these? Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: hey shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; nd in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come o Zion, with songs." "They shall go out with oy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains nd the hills shall break forth before them into inging, and all the trees of the field shall clap their ands."—Take its representations—What are these? o back to the beginning of the Gospel. The first hurches walked not only in the fear of the Lord, ut "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Peter, ddressing Christians at large, says, "In whom, beieving, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of lory." If *we* libel Christianity, and cause the way f truth to be evil spoken of, they honoured it. What hindered their joy? Losses did not—"They ook joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Perseutions did not—"They received the word in much ffliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Guilt did ot—They joyed in God, through our Lord Jesus hrist, by whom they received the atonement. Death id not—They longed to depart, to be with Christ, hich was far better. Eternity did not—They were ooking for that blessed hope, and hasting unto the oming of the day of God. Joy was then considered n essential part of genuine religion. The circumision not only worshipped God in the Spirit, and had o confidence in the flesh; but also rejoiced in hrist Jesus. And the Apostle would as soon have xcluded from it, righteous conduct, and a peaceable emper, as spiritual joy: for, says he, "the kingdom f God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, nd peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let us bring it to the bar of *experience*. Expe-

rience signifies knowledge derived from experiment, in opposition to theory and hypothesis. And experimental philosophy has been, of late years, much extolled. And why should not experimental religion be equally recommended? Is there no standard in spiritual things, to which we can appeal? And is there no way of subjecting the truth and importance of their claims to trial? Many are, indeed, too careless, and too prejudiced, to pursue the process. But some have examined, and reduced the subjects to decision. And they, and they only, are the persons to whom you should repair in a case of this kind. They have this advantage over you. You have never tried their principles: but they have tried yours. You have never walked in their ways: but they have walked in yours; and know, as well as you, that they are not pleasantness and peace. And, after trying your resources, and finding them to be vanity and vexation of spirit, they have tried the Saviour's promises, and have found them to be full of grace and truth. At first, they could only be swayed by faith; but now they have something more: they have the Witness in themselves. They know, for they have applied to him, that he is a suitable, a willing, a mighty Saviour. They know they were strangers to peace, till they were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son—but they have come to the blood of sprinkling. They know that once they were ignorantly asking, Who will shew us any good?—but they have found the fountain of life; and can say, It is good for me to draw nigh to God. *They*, therefore, ought to be heard. They can speak with confidence and earnestness; for they speak from experience—And this is their langage: "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Let us listen no longer to a report, as false as it is evil. It is a good land which the Lord our God giveth us. Let no man's heart fail him.

SEPT. 10.—"*They joy before Thee, according to the joy in harvest.*" Isaiah ix. 3.

They joy—BEFORE THEE. This shews

The *sincerity* of this joy. All men are in view of God; and they are always before him: but the wicked and worldly never *joy* before *him*. *Their* joy is all show and profession: it may deceive their fellow-creatures; but it cannot impose on God. He sees through all the hypocrisy of *their* happiness: he knows, that in the midst of their sufficiency, they are in straits; and that they sigh and groan, though others do not hear them, over all their successes and indulgences. Their joy is for company, not retirement. They cannot partake of it, till they forget God. One thought of him damps all their pleasure—Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. And hence, they dislike conscience, God's deputy and secretary. They cannot relish their enjoyments till they have sent him out of the way; or lulled him to sleep; or stupified him with an opiate; or silenced him with a bribe: one look—one word from conscience, will be enough to spoil all their delights. They never taste one drop of real joy. There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked.—But the Christian's joy will bear the gaze of God. It lives and flourishes in his presence. And so far is he from shrinking back from the eye of his heavenly Father, that the thought of being near him, with him, before him, affords him relief and satisfaction. He can say, with

Asaph, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

This reminds us of the *secrecy* of this joy—It is before him—and often he alone discerns it. Strangers intermeddle not with it. And the world knows it not. Seeing Christians often poor, and afflicted, and despised, they are at a loss to conceive how *they* can be joyful—They are therefore men wondered at. Their fellow-creatures can see their burdens—these are often plain enough: but they see not their supports; and how, underneath them, are the everlasting arms; or they would not wonder that they do not sink. They see their losses and trials; but their communion with God, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, are invisible. Neither are the subjects of this joy disposed to divulge it to all. They are, indeed, ready to say to them that fear God, Come, and I will tell *you* what he hath done for my soul: but, were they to communicate their feelings to others, they would not, could not, understand them. It would be worse than speaking of the pleasure of literature to a clown; or of the pleasure of melody and harmony to a man who has no ear for music. The joy also does not operate and discover itself like common mirth. It is not the froth that swims and shows on the surface. It lies deep. It is not noise, but composure. It is the calm of the mind: the content of the heart: the sunshine of the soul: a peace that passeth all understanding. A man, if joyful, does not joy like a child. "True joy is a serious thing."—But God sees his people, even when sorrowful, yet always rejoicing either in possession, hope, or desire. He sees them turning aside from the world, to refresh and exhilarate their

spirits alone with himself: and hears them (when no other hears them) saying, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."

"Be earth, with all her scenes, withdrawn;
"Let noise and vanity be gone:
"In secret silence of the mind,
"My heaven, and there my God, I find."

They joy before Him—and this also reminds us of the *medium* of this joy; not indeed exclusively, but pre-eminently so—It is connected with the *worship and ordinances of God.* And the allusion is to the three annual solemnities of the Jews when they went to appear *before the Lord* in Zion. For there he was considered as residing. There was his house—his table—his attendants. This, said he, is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.—Hence, says David, when shall I come, and appear before God?—These services were called feasts. There were songs to be sung in the way to them. The people went with the voice of joy and gladness to keep holy day. And when they arrived, they were required "to rejoice before him." Is God less present in our assemblies, than in those of the Jews? Has he not said, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"? And many can set to their seal that God is true. They know he is there, waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy. They have found him there, and conversed with him, as a man talketh with his friend. They have seen his power, and his glory, in the Sanctuary, and have there tasted that the Lord is gracious. Hence they hail the Sabbath, as the day of holy convocation, with delight. They are glad when the summons comes, to go into the house of the Lord. They come

before his presence with thanksgivings; and, as they approach their pleasant things, can say—

"The sorrows of the mind
"Be banish'd from this place:
"Religion never was design'd
"To make our pleasures less."

Yes, they who mourn; and are there comforted—They who come burdened with guilt; and are there set free—They who come in the midst of trouble, and find him in his palaces for a refuge—They who come cold and languid, and are quickened according to his word: these verify the promise, "I will bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer." And they know the meaning of the declaration—"They joy BEFORE THEE."

"Though pinch'd with poverty at home;
"With sharp afflictions daily fed:
"It makes amends, if they can come
"To God's own house for heav'nly bread.

"With joy they hasten to the place
"Where they their Saviour oft have met;
"And, while they feast upon his grace,
"Their burdens and their griefs forget."

SEPT. 11.—"*They joy before Thee, according to the joy in harvest.*" Isaiah ix. 3.

THEY joy before Him—ACCORDING TO THE JOY OF HARVEST. And what is this joy?

It is a joy connected with *exertion.* Reaping is no easy thing. But this is not all. There is manuring, and plowing, and sowing, and harrowing, and weeding. All these are previously necessary to the joy of harvest. The husbandman does not eat

the bread of idleness. His labour fills his hands. Every season has demands upon him: and the end of one work is the beginning of another. Indeed, nothing valuable is to be obtained without diligence and difficulty: yea, it would not be valuable, or prized, if it were acquired priceless and painless. And are not we to exercise ourselves unto godliness? And is it nothing to worship God in Spirit and in truth? And to watch in all things? And to pray without ceasing? And to keep the heart with all diligence? "But the grace of God does all this *for* us." It does. But it is equally true, that it does all this *by* us, too. God does not believe and repent; but enables us to believe and repent. *We* run the race that is set before us, and fight the good fight of faith—though in Him is all our help found.

This joy requires *patience*. The husbandman soweth in hope; but the accomplishment is future. Weeks and months, and many dreary weeks and months, intervene, before his wishes can be fulfilled. Yet he is not foolish enough to suppose, that he has laboured in vain, because he cannot reap as soon as he has sown; or childishly eager enough to cut down the grain green, to hasten the harvest. But what does he? "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." And so Abraham, after he had patiently endured, received the promise. Christians, also, are required to wait. And let them remember, that in due time they shall reap, if they faint not. And they have not long to wait. Their salvation is nearer than when they believed. Yet a few more rising and descending suns; and it shall be said, "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe." In the mean time the process is hourly advancing to maturity; and the end shall prove, that every thing is most beautiful and most profitable in its season. "It is

good for a man both to hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of the Lord."

This joy is not free from *anxieties*. When the seed is first thrown into the ground, it seems lost; and when it revives from a kind of death, and springs up, it has to encounter the frosts of winter, the changings and blights of spring, the lengthened dryness or wetness of summer. And when the period is arrived for securing the precious treasure, solicitude is more alive and alert. The husbandman often rises, and looks at the sky. Ten times in the day he examines the glass. He goes about with a heavy heart, and a depressed countenance; and often forebodes the worst: and it is not till he has safely housed the whole, that he can give up himself to satisfaction and delight. But how will this apply to Christians? Is there any thing precarious in the purpose and promise of God? No. But it is otherwise with their apprehensions. Their eternal prospects awaken all their concern; and they have a thousand doubts and fears concerning their safety and success. Am I an heir? Is this repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? Can these wandering thoughts and imperfect desires be prayer? What if, after all, I should fail of the grace of God, and come short of the glory to be revealed!

But this joy is *great*. When the harvest is come, every face betrays pleasure. The very toil seems delight. They that pass by say, "We bless you in the Name of the Lord." "He that soweth, and he that reapeth, now rejoice together." Pennant tells us, in his Travels, that in parts of Scotland he sometimes saw large numbers reaping, to the sound of a musician behind them, playing on the bagpipe; and thus enlivening the scene, and softening the work. And David says, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy"—or, as it is in the margin, reap singing. And he adds, "He that goeth forth, weeping, bearing

precious seed, shall, doubtless, return again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." And who has not heard the shoutings of the rustics, as the last loaded wain returned from the field, covered with green boughs? And who has not witnessed the rude mirth of harvest-home? But if "the poor labourers sing;" think of the owner! Now his anxieties are dispelled! now his patience is rewarded! now his exertion and expense are abundantly repaid—his garner is full, affording all manner of store; and he hails, in his possession, the means of indulgence, improvement, and wealth! Yet, what is this joy, compared with the Christian's! The one is for the body; the other, for the soul. One is for time; the other is for eternity. One is common to the wicked and the righteous; the other is peculiar to the subjects of Divine grace. The one may gender intemperance, and sin; the other sanctifies, while it contents.

Let me learn, then, to improve the works of creation to pious purposes; and make nature a handmaid to grace.

And let me be thankful for the harvest with which we have so recently been favoured. He has again "prepared of his goodness for the poor." All, indeed, are concerned—"The king is served by the labour of the field:" but kings have many ways of living, that poor people have not—We do not think of palaces or mansions, so much as of the dwellings of the poor, when we view the waving fields. He has not only given us plenty, but afforded us the appointed weeks of harvest. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

Yet man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Let me therefore labour, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting

life. All spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, are provided and presented. But the season for securing them is limited, short, and uncertain. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. And how many, in consequence of neglect, have exclaimed, at a dying hour—THE HARVEST IS PAST; THE SUMMER IS ENDED—AND WE ARE NOT SAVED!

SEPT. 12.—"*Yea, He loved the people.*"
Deut. xxxiii. 3.

THERE can be no doubt of this, with regard to Israel. They were often reminded of it, and as often told *why* he set his love upon them—The reason was not their greatness; for they were the fewest of all people. Not their goodness; for they were a stiff-necked people: but because the Lord had a favour towards them. Hence, he chose them, and redeemed them, and provided for them, and distinguished them, by miracles and privileges—"To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." "He dealt not so with any nation."

But has he less appeared to thee, O Christian! saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness have I drawn thee? Here is the source of your salvation. However wide, and however far it flows, here the river rises; and take what stream of it you please, it will lead you up to this spring-head, the free and undeserved favour of God—"Yea, He loved the people."

But his love to his people, so to speak, is of three kinds.

— A love of *benevolence*—which consists in wishing and designing them good.

— A love of *beneficence*—consisting in doing them

good. This appears in a thousand instances. But the principal one of all is, his remembering them in their low estate, and sending his only begotten Son into the world, that they might live through him. *Herein*, therefore, says the apostle John, is *love*; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It was necessary to find a way in which his goodness could reach us, consistently with his nature as a holy being, his claims as a lawgiver, and his honour as a governor. And this medium of our salvation does not, therefore, detract from the original of it: for if he required a sacrifice, he furnished one, and it was the *Lamb of God*. And therefore, the Apostle says, being justified *freely* by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

— A love of *complacency*. The love of benevolence, and the love of beneficence, regarded them as unworthy and as miserable: but the love of complacency regards them as new creatures. He cannot take pleasure in them while they are destitute of his image, and enemies to him by wicked works. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? But he prepares them for his delighting in them, and holding intercourse with them. He saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Then he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. Does a man take pleasure in his inheritance? In the wife of his bosom? In the children of his affection? In the work of his hands? They are all this, and more than all, to the God of all grace. He puts their tears into his bottle—Are they not in his book? Their prayer is his delight. Their alms are the odour of a sweet smell. He corresponds with them. Visits them. Takes up his abode with them. He rejoices over them with joy. He rests in his love. He joys over them with singing.

What can I wish for more? Suppose men reproach? Since I have been precious in Thy sight, I have been honourable; and Thou hast loved me. Let them curse; but bless Thou. One smile of Thine is better than life; and will more than balance a universe of frowns.

Let my portion, and the portion of mine, be—"The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush."

SEPT. 13.—"*And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?*" Gen. xv. 8.

— WHY had not God that very moment promised it? And was not his word sufficient?

They, surely, have never made the trial, who imagine that it is an easy thing to believe. To confide in a Being invisible, and whom we have so deeply offended, and to hang our everlasting hope upon his naked truth; requires the exertion of the power that raised up Christ from the dead. Who never feels in him the working of an evil heart of unbelief? Our Lord upbraided his own Apostles with their unbelief. And even the father of the faithful desires something more than God's engagement to give him the land of Canaan—Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Yet God pardoned his servant in this thing; and stooped to his weakness; and yielded him what he required. And Abraham was satisfied with the sign and the seal.

There is a better country, even a heavenly. The possession of it is an object worthy of all our concern. And they who love it, and seek it supremely, cannot leave their claim undecided and uncertain: and therefore their language will be, "Say unto my *soul*, I am thy salvation"—"Give me a token for

mod"—"Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Why you have the promise of God, who cannot lie! Yes: and this infallibly insures it, to all those to whom it belongs—But who are the *heirs* of promise? Away with dreams, and visions, and sounds in the air, and impulses, and accidental occurrences of passages of Scripture. We have surer evidence. We have unerring proofs, furnished by God himself. Search his Word with diligence and prayer. *There* you will find, not the names, indeed, of the heirs of eternal life; but their characters—their qualities—their taste—their choice—their way—their aim.

Let me fix on one of these vouchers, only—It is preparation for it. Where this is found, the title can never be absent. The Apostle therefore gives thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." In another place he says, "He hath wrought us for the self-same thing." And He does nothing in vain. If he has, by the agency of his Holy Spirit, fitted you, in the temper of your soul, for the world of glory, you may be assured that he designs you for it. If you bear the image of the heavenly, you will partake of their condition. If you have the dawn of that blessed state, you will have the day. Grace is of the same nature with glory—they differ only in the degree. Is heaven not only the high, but the holy place, into which entereth nothing that defileth? And do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?—Does the blessedness consist in adoring the Lamb, that was slain; and in being like him; and in seeing him as he is? And are you now glorying only in his Cross; and following him in the regeneration; and praying that you may know him in the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings?—Will the distinctions in life, now allowable and necessary, be done away; and only those remain which arise from character? And are you valuing persons, not according to their outward

circumstances, but their real, their moral, their spiritual worth?—As no enquiry will be made there, *where* we have worshipped; but *how:* nor to what denomination we pertained; but whether we were Jews inwardly —can you now pray, from the heart, "Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" Can you now say, "*Whosoever* shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother?" Then heaven is already begun; and therefore insured: for we are confident of this very thing, that he which hath *begun* a good work in you, will *perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* If you can take the representations of the employments and enjoyments of heaven given us in the Scripture; and can *desire* these things; and *hope* for these things; and find your *liberty* and *happiness* in them; you have the earnest of the inheritance, and are sealed, by the Holy Spirit of God, unto the day of redemption. Let me not, then, O my soul! be faithless, but believing; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

"When I can read my title clear
"To mansions in the skies,
"I bid farewell to every fear,
"And wipe my weeping eyes."

SEPT. 14.—"*Lean not unto thine own understanding.*" Prov. iii. 5.

THE understanding is a natural faculty, by which man is distinguished from inanimate creatures, and also from the animal world. The sun, and moon, and sea, and rivers, are impressed by laws, of which they know nothing; and follow their destiny, wholly unconscious of the operations they perform. The

beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, have an instinct which often surprises us. But, while it is exact as far as it goes, it is exceedingly limited: it admits of no variety or progression. These beings are no wiser now than when they went to Noah for shelter, and to Adam for names—But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. By means of this endowment, he can look backward and forward. He can examine and judge. He can survey principles in their abstraction; and duties in their circumstances; and actions in their moral bearings. He can refuse the evil, and choose the good, against present feelings, and imposing appearances.

This faculty, from the lowest degree of reason to the highest reach of intellect, is the gift of God, the Father of lights; and should be cultivated by us, as men and as Christians. We should rejoice that we live in a country and in an age so favourable to all kinds of information. It is a sad reproach to many, that, in the midst of knowledge, they are found so ignorant as they are—it must be the result of dissipation or sloth.

But though we are to prize, and improve, and make use of our understanding, we are not to *lean* to it. Yet, if we were not prone to this, the caution would be needless. There is nothing of which men are so proud as their knowledge. There are more than a few who would rather be charged with a want of principle than a want of understanding; and would rather pass for knaves than fools. This regard seems, indeed, to be a kind of equalizer of the human race: and the only thing with which all are satisfied, and in which they feel an ineffable complacency, is their *own* understanding. They lean to their *own* understanding, in preference to the understanding of others; whom yet, if asked, they would consider as very superior to themselves, both in capacity and experience. They may, indeed, consult

with an adviser; but it is in hope of finding a confirmation of their own opinion: and should his judgment differ from their conclusion, they would feel little difficulty in resolving by which to abide. We frequently see this in those who are just entering the world, and so much need a guide, to escape those early mistakes that may affect the whole of their future life. Whatever quickness of perception they may possess, they must surely be destitute of that practical wisdom that grows out of observation and trial.—Yet how little do "the younger submit themselves to the elder."—Men carry this disposition even into the things of God. They regard their own reason more than his word; and are reluctant to believe what they cannot comprehend. We are told that Alphonsus, the royal astronomer, having apprehended some seeming irregularities among the heavenly bodies, was daring enough to say, "Had I been by the Creator when he made the world, I could have given him some good advice." We justly shudder at his profaneness—and yet, who has not fallen into a similar error? Who has not found fault with God, in his manner of governing the world, the Church, the family, the individual? Who has not been ready to direct the Spirit of the Lord; and, being his counsellor, to teach him?

To preserve us from this tendency, Let us remember how limited our own understanding is; how many subjects there are entirely beyond its reach; and that there is nothing with which it is perfectly acquainted. Let us also reflect, how much we are impressed by appearances; and how different these often are from the realities of things. "Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life; all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" What should we have been at this hour, if things had always accorded with our mind and wishes? Let us look back, and see how frequently we have erred, both in our hopes and fears. We now clearly see, that what we

so eagerly desired, would have proved our injury or ruin; and that what we were so anxious to escape has conduced to our best welfare: so that we can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

We are very incompetent to judge for ourselves, because we know not the influence other and untried events will exert upon us. To these, we go forward with our present views and feelings; not aware that new scenes will produce new views and feelings; and may unfold secrets in our character of which we have no conceptions, and which may fill us, not only with surprise, but dismay. Thus, when Elisha predicted, with tears, the atrocities and cruelties he would commit, Hazael shuddered at the thought, and sincerely exclaimed, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"—the man of God only answered, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria"—and his elevation transformed him from the man into the monster which he had execrated! And if, by leaning to our own understanding, we take one wrong step, what consequences, immediate or remote, personal or relative, may arise from it! See this in David. I shall now perish, said he, one day, by the hand of Saul: "there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines"—The Oracle, had he consulted it, would not have told him so. In truth, it was the worst measure he could have devised; as it tended to alienate the affections of his countrymen; to justify the reproaches of his enemies; to deprive himself of the means of grace; to put himself out of the Divine protection; and to lay him under obligations to a benefactor he could not oblige, without betraying the cause of God. Accordingly, he was soon drawn into a scandalous equivocation with Achish; and was ordered to go and fight against his own people Israel. And when he was released from this embarrassment, and went back, he found that, in his absence, his residence

and property had been destroyed, and his family carried away captives. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Lot leaned to his own understanding; and chose the land-vale of Sodom, which was well-watered, like the garden of the Lord. By this movement, he separated himself from intercourse with his pious uncle. He was taken captive by the confederate kings. He was strangely induced to reside in the town itself; and dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds. At length, he was burnt out of house and home. His wife, for looking back, became a pillar of salt; so that he never after could go or look that way. His daughters damned by the vices of the place—But we dare not go on—Trust in the Lord with all thine heart—Lean not to thy own understanding—In all thy ways acknowledge HIM, and HE shall direct thy paths.

SEPT. 15.—"*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" Acts ix. 6.

THIS is a very marvellous question, considering from whom it came. For the enquirer, till now, had hated the Name of Jesus; and was at this very time actually engaged in the persecution of his followers. What would he have thought, if some one could have told him previously, that in a few hours, in a few moments, he would be a worshipper at the feet of the Nazarene! But so it was: and he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Let us never despair. The chief of sinners are within his reach. He has a mighty arm; strong is his hand, and high is his right hand. What changes

is his grace already accomplished: and what changes ust it accomplish still, if the promise be fulfilled, Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and stead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; id it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an ever-sting sign, that shall not be cut off." But let us ake this inquiry our own. It is every way worthy f our adoption.

It is personal in its aim—Lord, what wilt thou ave *me* to do? Many seem more anxious to reprove hers, than to know their own faults; and are busily mployed in pulling the mote out of their brother's ye, while a beam is in their own. Some are always eading and hearing for others. And we have known ersons applying, in a sermon, to some fellow-wor-hipper, things, every one else in the assembly would ave deemed most proper for themselves. But we hould think of ourselves in divine things; and bring ome every truth to our own business and bosoms, whether it encourages or censures—praying, Search ie, O God, and know my heart; try *me*, and know ny thoughts; and see if there be any evil way in me, nd lead me in the way everlasting. When our Lord ad informed Peter of his duty and destiny, Peter saw ohn coming towards him, and asked, Lord, and what hall *this* man do? But our Saviour said, What is hat to thee? follow thou me.

It is practical in its subject—What wilt thou have ie to *do*?—Not to know, to hear, to believe, to talk f—Religion, indeed, extends to every thing: but very thing is not essential to it. But practice is. f ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. 'aith, without works, is dead, being alone. Though man say, he hath faith, and hath not works; can aith save him? Every part of the truth, as it is in esus, has a bearing upon the heart, and the life, of he receiver; and is according to godliness.

It is impartial in its desire—Lord, *what* wilt thou ave me to do? I do not prescribe. I do not select.

I do not prefer—Thy pleasure, alone, I ask to know, and am resolved to follow—Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. True obedience is compatible with defects; but not with partialities. If a man regards some things, and not others, in religion; those he regards, he regards from some other motive than the will of God: for *this* would lead him to regard the one, as well as the other; seeing they are all enjoined by the very same authority. He that offends in one point, is guilty of all; not in the act, but in the principle—*i.e.*, he violates the authority of the whole. For he that said, Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, said also, Enter into thy closet. If, therefore, you engage in public worship, and never retire for devotion, you are an offender. He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill: now if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law. We never can truly obey, therefore, unless we can say, with David, I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

SEPT. 16.—"*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" Acts ix. 6.

BEFORE we yield ourselves to any one, we should have full confidence in him; and the confidence should be founded on knowledge. To no fellow-creature can we wholly resign ourselves, either of right, or with safety; for as he has no title to us, so we know not what his depravity may require of us. We owe duties to our fellow-creatures; and to many of them we may say, What wilt *thou* have me to do? Yet we must obey *them* only "in the Lord." But His authority is supreme. He has infinite claims to my implicit homage.

Five principles demand and more than justify the absolute surrender of myself to Him—saying, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

First. The righteousness and excellency of his requirements. Each of his prohibitions only says, Do thyself no harm. Each of his injunctions is an order to be wise, and rich, and noble, and happy. While following Him, my understanding never blushes; my conscience never reproaches me. I can give a reason for my obedience, as well as my hope. His will is always a reasonable service—His work is honourable and glorious.

Secondly. The relations in which he stands to his people. He is their Husband—He is their Father—He is their Master—He is their Sovereign—He is their Maker—from whom they have derived all they have and are. And surely, in each of these, it becomes them to ask, "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?"

Thirdly. His greatness. This is unsearchable. He is Lord of all. All the angels of God worship him. All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things; and by him all things consist. His greatness is necessary to the illustration of his goodness; and crowns it with glory and honour. What condescension is there, where there is no dignity? But he was in the form of God, and took upon him the form of a servant—There was the stoop! He was rich; and, for our sakes, became poor—There was the grace! Greatness alone produces not attachment, but dread and aversion. But, while *he* has all power in heaven and in earth, he is full of grace and truth—

> "His heart is made of tenderness;
> "His bowels melt with love."

Therefore, fourthly, the obligations he has laid us under by his kindness. What are the obligations

any of our fellow-creatures have laid us under? What have they done for us? suffered for us? How few, how inconsiderable, how unexpensive, how unattended with any thing like sacrifice and self-denial, have their acts of favour been! But he, without our desert, and against the greatest demerit, remembered us in our low estate; and, in his love and pity, redeemed us. And how? He was made a curse for us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. By his stripes we are healed. Where does he stand? how does he appear? when he says, My son, give me thy heart?—

"See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
"Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
"Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
"Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

And can we wonder at the result?

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
"That were a present far too small:
"Love so amazing, so Divine,
"Demands my soul, my life, my all."

No legal process ever produced this surrender. The display of terror and mere authority never made one cordial convert to any cause. Would you be induced to love another, by his commanding you to do so, and his threatening you, if you do not? No; but by a display of love—Love begets love. And we love Him, because he first loved us—At the Cross we are effectually wooed and won—There we are drawn, and there we are bound with cords of a man and the bands of love.

Lastly. His engagement to reward our devotedness to him. Christians are not mercenary; but they cannot serve him for nought. The recompense must be of grace, and not of works—so much the better is it for their hope: for it is to be measured and judged of now, not according to their doings, but

his own abundant mercy, which is to be displayed therein. Hence will he say at last, with regard to those poor performances over which they have blushed and wept, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But he is not unrighteous to forget their work of faith and labour of love, even now. *In* keeping his commandments, there is great reward. Great peace have they that love his law; and nothing shall offend them. He is the best of masters. He furnishes them with ability for their work. He lays no more upon his servants than he enables them to bear. He will comfort them in affliction. He will not cast them off in old age. He will remember the kindness of their youth. When heart and flesh fail, he will be the strength of their heart and their portion for ever. And at death, receive them to himself; that where he is there they may be also.—Sinners talk of the pleasures of sin; but they never commend them at last. The people of the world boast of its amusements and delights; but they never speak well of it at parting. In every season, in every condition, however trying, the Christian can say—Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord.

"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

SEPT. 17.—"*Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened*

his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." Matt. xvii. 27.

In the midst of this supernatural scene, a sanction is thus given by our Saviour, to the use of means. The supply was, in its source, preparation, and announcement, miraculous; yet Peter, who is to receive it as a favour, is to procure it by his instrumentality. The peculiar nature of the instance only renders it the more conclusive: for if our Lord would not dispense with the use of means in an extraordinary case, surely he will not dispense with it in an ordinary one. Some good, but not very wise people, seem to think that instrumentality detracts from the Divine glory; and that God is honoured more by acting *im*-mediately. But instrumentality supposes and requires agency: and the means themselves are always the Lord's own; and he gives them their success. His producing an effect by various concurrences and co-operations, displays more of his perfections, and gives more opportunity to observe them, than his causing a result, by an instant volition.

Here was something which Peter could do, and something which he could not do. He could not replenish the fish with the money, or make it to swim in the direction of his bait; but he could procure the bait, and throw in the hook; and in the most likely place; and stand; and watch. Why does not the Lord dispense with all this? and cause the fish to spring on shore? and appear at once upon Peter's table? Because he would not sanction indolence. Because he would render even his miracles moral, as well as marvellous. Because his exertions were not a mere parade of power; but a display of wisdom and goodness, meeting indigence, relieving weakness, confirming faith: but not encouraging folly and presumption—teaching us to trust—but forbidding us to tempt him.

In like manner, there is always something which

ve cannot do; and something which we can do—
ut the evil is, that we commonly derive from the
ormer, excuses for our neglect of the latter: and
o God's agency becomes a reason for our inactivity,
nstead of exciting our diligence—perfectly contrary
o the meaning of the Apostle, when he says, "Work
ut your salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is
God which worketh in you to will and to do of his
good pleasure." In natural things we are wiser.
Can the husbandman produce an ear of corn? He
nows it is perfectly impossible. But he can manure,
nd plough, and sow; and in the use of these he ex-
ects the divine efficiency—but *never* in the *neglect* of
hem. No man can quicken his own soul. But there
re means which are designed and adapted to serve
s; and we can pray, "Come, thou north wind, and
low, thou south." It is thus that religion possesses
he evidence of analogy; and in the God of grace,
we see the God of nature. He feeds the fowls of
he air, not by putting it into their mouths; but
by furnishing provision; and giving them wings,
nd eyes, and feet, and beaks, to find and make
t their own—"That thou givest them, they gather"
—And *thus* "he satisfies the desire of every living
hing." He could warm us without the fire, and
sustain us without food—but we know what would
be the consequence were we to disregard these, under
a notion of honouring him by a dependence on *his*
agency.

Though the effect here was beyond the means,
yet there was an *adaptation* in them. Peter was a
fisherman; and he is employed in his own line: and
his fishing was not only the condition of the result,
but the medium—and *conduced* to it. And in general
we may observe that while the insufficiency of the
means serves to display the power of God, the suita-
bleness of them shews his wisdom. And such a
suitableness there is. A pen cannot write without
a hand to use it; yet there is an adaptation in the

instrument to the work. Some seem to use the means of grace only as *tests* of their submission to the Divine appointment—not as things which have a real tendency even in themselves to do them good. They expect the Divine blessing *in* them, but not *by* them —*i.e.* not as an effect resulting *from* them under the Divine influence—as if in the use of them they were planting and watering pebbles, which, by an Almighty exertion, *could* be made to yield produce—instead of using them as a man sows wheat, and looks for wheat to arise from it—not without God, but by God, in his own way. Faith cometh *by* hearing; and hearing tends to produce it, by informing and convincing the mind. The same may be said of a religious education, in forming the moral and pious character of the child.

— Peter did well not to disobey, or reason; but to follow implicitly the Divine order; fully expecting success. And he was not—could not be—disappointed. And thus let us act without murmuring, or disputing. Let us use the means which he has prescribed, not only swayed by his authority, but relying on his promise—that none of those that wait for him shall be ashamed.

SEPT. 18.—"*I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.*" Zech. ix. 11.

PERSONS may be prisoners, as felons, as robbers, as debtors, as captives taken in war. The character of the subjects of Divine grace, by nature, involved all these.

A pit wherein there is no water is a situation expressive of destitution, wretchedness, and danger.

here the victim has nothing to relieve his wants; othing to quench his raging thirst. He cannot ve in it. He cannot escape from it. He is ready to erish. Such was Joseph's pit, and Jeremiah's dun- eon. In such a condition the Lord finds his people.

But he does not leave them there. He always roduces a change in their favour. If they are dark- ess, he calls them into his marvellous light. If hey are far off, he brings them nigh. If they are risoners in a pit wherein there is no water—he sends hem out of it. In his love and pity he redeems hem, and makes them free indeed.

The work is entirely his own; and the principle annot be mistaken. How unworthy were they of is notice! How great the evil from which they ave been rescued! How infinite the blessedness esulting from it! And after such a deliverance as his, shall they again break his commandments? A oul redeemed, demands a life of praise. Let my eople go, that they may serve me. What has he ent them out of their bondage to do? but to go nd tell sinners, such as they themselves once were, hat with the Lord there is mercy, and with him lenteous redemption? but to shew forth his praise? nd acknowledge, by the grace of God they are what hey are? but to walk in newness of life? to run in he way of his commandments? to return and come o Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their ead?

And can this be a task? Did Zechariah think o when he sung and prayed—"That He would grant nto us, that we being delivered out of the hand f our enemies, might serve him without fear; in oliness, and righteousness before him, all the days f our lives?"

SEPT. 19.—"*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord.*" Hosea vi. 3.

WHETHER we consider these words as an excitation and an encouragement addressed by the godly to each other, or to their own souls; they remind us of an important aim; a necessary duty; and an assured privilege.

— The *aim* is, "to know the Lord." For the soul to be without knowledge it is not good. All the operations of the Spirit are begun and carried on in the renewing of the mind. Nothing can be moral or religious in our dispositions and actions, that is not founded in knowledge; because it must be destitute of principle and motive; and the Lord looketh at the heart. Real repentance must arise from proper views of the evil of sin, in connexion with the Cross of Christ—"They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him." Even faith is impossible, without knowledge —"For how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" But what says the Saviour? "This is life eternal, that they know Thee, the only true God; and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This declaration not only decides the importance of this knowledge, but also the nature of it—It is not a philosophical knowledge of God, as an almighty being, the maker and upholder of all things: or even a knowledge of him as holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Such views of him, alone, must, on the mind of a sinner, gender dread and aversion. The grand thing in the restoration of a fallen and guilty creature, is to know that he is reconcileable; that he is willing, even now, to become our friend; and has already given undeniable proof that he is waiting to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon him. And all this is only to be seen in the Only Begotten of the Father, who has declared him. God in nature, is God above

me; God in providence, is God beyond me; God in law, is God against me: but God in Christ, is God for me, and with me.—Neither is this knowledge of him a merely speculative acquaintance with him; such as men may possess, who behold, and wonder, and perish. There is a great difference between the decisions of the judgment, and the bias of the will; between the convictions of the conscience, and the submission and acquiescnce of the heart—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"—"I will give them a heart to know me"—"He hath shined in our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

Connected with this, there is a necessary *duty*. It is "to follow on" to know the Lord.

— This takes in the practice of what we already know. To what purpose would it be for God to afford the light they have not, to those who neglect the light they have?—It would only increase their sin and their condemnation. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." And we see this constantly exemplified. When men love not to retain God in their knowledge, it is their interest to see things less clearly; and so they part with one truth after another, as it becomes troublesome: till God gives them up to strong delusion to believe a lie. While those who do his will, know of the doctrine; advancing towards the light, they get more into its shining; and as far as they have already attained, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing, if in any thing else they be otherwise minded, God reveals even this unto them.

— It also includes diligence in the use of appointed means: such as reading the Scriptures; and hearing the Word preached; and meditation; and "walking with wise men"—and, above all, prayer to the Father

of lights, according to the promise, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

— It must also mean perseverance in this course. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Here is not only watching, but waiting. Some run well; and are hindered. But we are to run with patience the race that is set before us: and, by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

— Nor shall this be *in vain*. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." The privilege is as *sure* as the word of God, confirmed by his faithfulness, and all history, and all experience, can make it. And if probability will actuate a man to engage in an enterprize, and continue in a series of exertions and sacrifices; how much more should actual certainty! Let therefore this full assurance of hope excite and influence us in two cases.

The first is with regard to ourselves. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright. Keep his way; and your path shall be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Your perplexities shall be solved. Your doubts removed. Your fears subdued. Crooked things shall be made straight; and rough places plain. You shall know more of him in his word, providence, and grace; and more of him as the strength of *your* heart, and your portion for ever.

The second regards others. Be not impatient if they cannot embrace all your religious views at once; and are amazed at some parts of your experience. In grace, as well as in nature, there must

be infancy before manhood. Though now their acquaintance with divine things be small, and they only see men as trees walking, the Enlightener will put his hand a second time to the work, and they shall see clearly. If their heart be broken off from sin and the world; and they are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward—they shall not err therein. "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

SEPT. 20.—"*In him is no sin.*" 1 John iii. 5.

— No sin original. David said, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. The same may be said by every individual of the human race. Our Saviour was truly a man—But to secure him, in the participation of our nature, from pollution, behold a new thing in the earth! He is made only of a woman: a virgin conceives and bears a son: and that holy thing which is born of her, is called the Son of God. His people are holy by renovation: he was so by nature. Even when sanctified, they feel within them a conflict: the flesh and the Spirit oppose each other, and they cannot do the things that they would. But he had no warfare of this kind. He could not say, I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. All his senses, and appetites, and passions, moved in obedidience to reason, and in unison with the will of God.

Hence there was in him no sin actual. In proof of this, the testimony of his friends may be deemed partial—though they had the best opportunities of knowing him; and they all gloried in the avowal, that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. But hear the multitude—He hath done all things well. Hear the dying thief—This man hath

done nothing amiss. Hear Pilate, who judicially examined him—I find no fault in this man: I am pure from the blood of that just man. Hear Judas, the domestic spy, after three years of intimacy with him —I have betrayed innocent blood. No one ever had more keen or malicious observers, especially in the Pharisees, whom he had exasperated to fury, by laying opon their pious wickedness to the people. But he challenged every adversary—Which of you convinceth me of sin? If there be any thing in us susceptible of evil influence, Satan will be sure to find it; for he has a bait to suit every disposition—but the Prince of this world came and had nothing in him. He struck the sparks, but there was no tinder. Events, whether prosperous or painful, are severe trials. If there be mud at the bottom, the waves will cast up mire and dirt—But he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He was made under the law; and this law is so spiritual, that the holiest of men, when they have compared themselves with it, have always prayed, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified—But even this law had nothing to complain of in him; it found, in principle and in practice, all the obedience it required. And how was he viewed by Him, who is greater than the heart, and knoweth all things? He always did the things that pleased the Father.

— The fact, therefore, is undeniable. But whence this exception? How came this one man alone to have no sin in him, while, as to the myriads of the human race beside, they are all gone out of the way; there is none righteous, no, not one? It can only be accounted for upon the admission that he was the Lord from heaven; the holy One of God; the Word made flesh; the Only Begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth; who received not the Spirit by measure; in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

This is not an unimportant decision. The innocency of his character affects the credibility of his mission and his doctrine. A being in whom was no sin, could not have been a deceiver: but he constantly declared that he came forth from God; that he came to seek and to save that which was lost; that he would cast out none that came to him.—Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

It serves to evince the *nature* of his suffering and death. He had no sin of his own; and therefore if he died not for the sins of others, he died without any reference to sin at all. And where is the God of judgment? That be far from him, to slay the righteous with the wicked. No one ever suffered under his government absolutely innocent; but either as personally or relatively guilty: bearing his own desert, or the desert of others. But in him was no sin—yet he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And so he was—"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Without this, he could not have been qualified for his work. He had *immediately* to approach Infinite Purity. His sacrifice would not have been accepted, unless he had offered himself without spot to God. Such an High Priest became us, who was harmless, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and who needed not to suffer for his own sins, dying only for those of others.

—What a character is here! Others are lovely; but he is altogether lovely.—And see what humanity can become—and will become, in all his followers. For they are predestinated to be conformed to him. The spirits of just men will be made perfect; and though they will be re-embodied, their bodies will have no seed of corruption in them; for they also will be not derived, but produced. They could not have full communion with him, without complete

likeness to him—But this we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, *for we shall see him as he is.* "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

SEPT. 21.—"*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*" Exod. xxxiii. 14.

THIS exceeding great and precious promise belongs to the Christian, as well as to Moses.—What is he authorized to expect from it?

My presence shall go with thee *to guide thee*, and I will give thee rest *from perplexity*. How miserable would a man be in travelling, if his journey were important, and yet he was ignorant of the way, and every moment liable to err! In this case nothing could relieve him so much as a guide who was willing to go with him, and able to shew him the course he should always take. And his satisfaction would be in proportion to the confidence he reposed in the disposition and capacity of his leader. Nothing can equal the importance of the journey we are taking; life or death, salvation or perdition, depends upon the issue: and "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If left to himself, he will err at every step, and in the greatness of his folly go for ever astray. The Christian feels this, and therefore prays, "Lead me in thy truth, and guide me, for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day." And does God disregard his cry? "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." This extends to doctrine; to experience; to

ll his temporal concerns. He is not indeed to look or miracles, but he is under the conduct of God; nd he has given no promise but can be, and shall e fulfilled. When the Jews were marching to anaan, they had a pathless desert to go through: ut they were free from all perplexity, because they ad a fiery, cloudy pillar, to regulate all their move- ents. We have the same. For "this God is our od for ever and ever: he will be our guide even nto death."

My presence shall go with thee to *guard thee*, nd I will give thee rest from apprehension. A hristian has not only a pilgrimage, but a warfare o accomplish. No sooner has he set his face Zion- ard, than he has reason to exclaim, "Lord, how re they increased that trouble me! Many there be hich rise up against me; many there be that say f my soul, there is no help for him in God." And hat wonder if, while without are fightings, within re fears? And how is he to rise above them? He nows, that if left to himself, he must perish, long efore he reaches that better country. But he is ot alone. There is One at his right hand, who says, 'Abide with me; for he that seeketh thy life, seeketh ny life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." t the sound of this, his mind is relieved, his con- idence rises, and he sings, "The Lord is my light nd my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is he strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

My presence shall go with thee *to provide for thee*, nd I will give thee rest *from anxiety*. The manna as not to be hoarded, but gathered daily; and e are to feel our constant dependance upon God or the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And s this trying? Could we wish it to be otherwise?

"Though in ourselves we have no stock,
"The Lord is nigh to save:
"The door flies open when we knock,
"And 'tis but ask, and have."

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "My grace is sufficient for thee." What more can we desire?—When we have trusted in God for the soul, it might be imagined that it would be easy to trust in him for the body. But temporal things are sensible, and near, and pressing: and some cases would be enough to awaken all their forebodings: but he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing." Jehovah-jireh! The Lord will provide.

My presence shall go with thee *to comfort thee*, and I will give thee rest *from sorrow*. However you may be stripped, you shall not be destitute of consolation. Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine—you shall rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation. His presence is a substitute for any creature; it more than repairs every loss. Some leave us from rottenness of principle; some from infirmity, rather than depravity. Death abridges our circles. Who can look back over a few years, and not exclaim, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness?" Yet if the lamps be extinguished, the sun continues. If the streams fail, we have the fountain. Are the consolations of God small with thee? In the multitude of thy thoughts within thee, do not his comforts delight thy soul?

But there is an event that must take place—Oh! when I shall gather up my feet into the bed, and turn my face to the wall—then, all creatures withdrawn, and flesh and heart failing—oh! what can support me in the prospect, and, above all, in the reality? Be of good courage. He who is with thee in the Wilderness, will be with thee at the swellings of Jordan, and open a way through the flood, and

give thee a dry-shod passage over, into the land flowing with milk and honey. He who has been with thee in life, will be still more with thee in death. And therefore you may boldly say, with one before you, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

From this hour, let me never forget this blessed promise—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Let me believe it with a faith unfeigned. Let me ascertain my title to it. Let me plead it before the Throne of Grace. Let me apply it in my perplexities, and apprehensions, and anxieties, and sorrows. Let me bind it about my neck, and write it upon the table of my heart—that when I go, it may lead me; when I sleep, it shall keep me; and when I awake, it may talk with me. Amen.

SEPT. 22.—"*Thy Maker is thine husband.*" Isaiah liv. 5.

THE relation in which God stands to us must be all-important. If we are his people, he is related to us, not only as the God of nature and providence, but as the God of grace. This spiritual connexion is held forth under various forms—none of which is more common, simple, or well-known, than the marriage union.

The marriage union is honourable in all. It is exemplified in the larger part of the human race. It was established in Paradise, where it was not good for man to be alone: and in commendation of it, our Saviour wrought his first miracle. But, applied to

God and us, it is a metaphor; and therefore to be soberly explained. For while we are not to overlook the wisdom and kindness of the Holy Ghost in meeting our weakness of apprehension, we are not to press every circumstance of the comparison into an article of allusion. The relation into which God enters with his people, is analagous to that which subsists between the husband and the wife. This could be easily explained and understood.

But let us take the reality of the connexion itself to shew us three things. First. The condescension and goodness of God. Nothing will bear a comparison with it. Consider what *He* is; his independence, his greatness, and his glory. And view *them* in their unworthiness, lowness, vileness. How wonderful that *He* should thus magnify *them*—and set his heart upon them! They had neither birth, nor relations, nor wealth, nor wisdom, to recommend them. It cannot, indeed, be denied that they are distinguished by all these attributes now: but this is the consequence of the relation, and not the cause of it—"*Since* thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee."

Secondly. The privilege of believers. Blessed are the people who are in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord. They have one, in the nearest of all relations to them, who is love itself; and will bear with their infirmities, and in all their afflictions be afflicted—who is infinitely wise, and knows their frame, and will never mistake their welfare—who is almighty, and able to defend them from every danger, and to make all things work together for their good—who is faithfulness and truth, and will never leave them nor forsake them—who lives for ever, and renders the union eternal and indissolvable.

Thirdly. Their duty. They must mind their husband's concerns. They must regard properly his

relations. They must obey him—the wife promises this in marriage; and the Apostle enjoins it: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands. He extends it to every thing; but this must be qualified with one condition—every thing reasonable and righteous. Vashti refused Ahasuerus, when he sent for her to come and exhibit herself before a company of intoxicated lords and officers, in violation of all decency, and the laws of veiled concealment in which women then lived: and we justify her disobedience. But, with regard to us, the will of God is absolute, not only because he has a propriety in us which one creature can never have in another, but because all his commandments are right.—The wife is required to reverence her husband. This must be a hard saying in some cases, seeing there are sometimes so very few materials to excite veneration in the *head* of the wife—But this should have been thought of before: and persons should not voluntarily contract relations, the duties of which they cannot perform, and dare not neglect. But God's excellencies are infinite. It is delightful to give him the glory that is due to his holy Name.—The wife, also, must be faithful to her husband: "she is for him, and not for another." And we are only the Lord's. There is such a thing as spiritual adultery; to avoid which we are to keep ourselves from idols. Milton's wife returned home again; but she came back and humbled herself, and was re-admitted to favour. Here is the duty of the Church—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

SEPT. 23.—"*I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the* Lord.

And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. iv. 2—4.

The Apostle much valued and commended the Philippian converts. He here calls them—his "brethren;" his "dearly beloved;" "and longed for;" his "joy and crown." Many people *distress* and *disgrace* their ministers; but these yielded Paul both *comfort* and *honour*. He does not, however, deem them above the need of exhortation. Yet, though he might have been bold to enjoin what was convenient, for love's sake he beseeches and entreats. The subject is threefold.

First. Unanimity and concord. This regards a particular instance of disagreement in the Church. "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Here were two women, obviously of some note, who were at variance. We are not informed whether the ground of difference was civil, or religious. Perhaps it was owing to a talebearer; for a talebearer separateth true friends. Perhaps it was a mere trifle in the outset. In our mistakes, prejudices, passions, and infirmities, the enemy of souls always finds materials for exciting dislike and contention. Perhaps they were both to blame—this is commonly the case; and therefore the Scripture says, forgiving *one another*. The feelings of females are quick; and their imaginations too often give importance to a real or supposed offence. And two such individuals at variance, may draw in others, form parties, and embroil a whole Church. When this is the case, their own edification is at an end; and from others is driven that union of soul, which is necessary to give efficacy to social prayer, when we meet together in one place, with one accord, waiting for the promise of the

Father. The Apostle, therefore, would not that Euodias and Syntyche should oppose, or keep shy of, each other; but composing their difference, keep the peace, and live in love. The Saviour is the Lamb of God; and if we have the mind that was in him, we shall display "the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ." The Holy Ghost descended upon the Head, and enters his followers, as a dove: and

> "The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
> "Flies from the realms of noise and strife:
> "Why should we vex and grieve his love,
> "Who seals our souls to heav'nly life?"

— We read in ecclesiastical history of two Christians who had quarrelled in the morning; but in the evening one of them sent a note to the other—"Brother, the sun is going down"—referring to the Apostle's words, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath"—and the hint produced reconciliation. When President Edwards had preached one of his first sermons after the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit upon his labours, he observed two families, when the congregation had withdrawn, remaining, as if by joint consent. Upon approaching them, he found they had, to that day, been in a state of variance; but owing to the influence they were now under, they could not depart from the House of God till they were reconciled.

— Secondly. Mutual assistance. "I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." Some have imagined that those women here alluded to were Euodias and Syntyche. If it were so, we should learn that persons who have been betrayed into improper temper and conduct, in a partial instance, may yet have been worthy and useful characters; and they are

not to be rejected, but restored, in the spirit of meekness. But such a limitation is unnecessary. Whatever these females were, they had co-operated with Paul and his associates in the ministry—not in public preaching; for this our Apostle had expressly forbidden; but in various offices suited to their sex and condition; by their devotion, and example, and conversation; by their privately instructing the ignorant; by their bringing up children; washing the saints' feet; attending benevolent institutions; ministering to the wants of the apostles. All who wish to be useful, may be employed without violating any of the decorums of life, or quitting their proper stations.—On their behalf, Paul addresses his "true yokefellow." It is absurd to suppose this means, as some have thought, Paul's wife. For it seems more than probable that he never was married: and the gender of the adjective here used, is masculine. Was it the jailor? He had been one of the Apostle's first converts at Philippi; and had much assisted him in the Gospel. Or was it Epaphroditus? But *he* was not at this time at Philippi. Perhaps it was some one of the bishops or deacons, mentioned in the beginning of the Epistle; with whom Paul had been peculiarly connected in travelling, and preaching. Whoever he was, he was to help those females who had been so serviceable to Paul, and Clement, and their comrades: by his prayers, and consolations; and every kind of attention their personal or relative, temporal or spiritual, circumstancess would require. How honourable was it to be thus distinguished and recommended by the Apostle! Who was ever a loser by any thing he did for the cause of the Redeemer? He that watereth shall be watered also. God is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labour of love. Wheresoever the Gospel is preached, that which these women did shall be told for a memorial of them.

Thirdly. Constant joy—"Rejoice in the Lord

lway: and again I say, Rejoice." Rejoicing is a leasing exercise; but it is not so easy a one. In vale of tears; in an enemy's country; without, ghtings; within, fears; pressed down with a sense f unworthiness; burdened with infirmities; wearied rith a body of sin and death: what wonder if we often ang our harp on the willows? or, at least, that we annot always sing the Lord's song?—Yet we are njoined to rejoice "always." We are. But how? n what? In whom? In the world? In creatures? n ourselves? Then would it indeed be impracticable. But it is "in the Lord." And in Him there is enough t all times, and in every condition, to encourage nd delight. We are empty; but in him all fulness lwells. In him is all the wisdom, pardon, righte- ousness, strength, and hope, we need. His grace is ufficient for us—He is an INFINITE RESOURCE.

—Therefore says the Apostle—I have not spoken houghtlessly—I know what I have said; and why have said it—I know that the thing is possible—And I know, also, that it is proper—that nothing ecomes a Christian more; and that by nothing can e be more useful—I therefore repeat it—AND AGAIN SAY, REJOICE.

SEPT. 24.—"*He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*"

1 John ii. 6.

THE state here spoken of, is *abiding in* Christ. A man's *saying* he is thus in him, is done two ways. The one is to himself—and so it is belief. The other is to his fellow-creatures—and so it is profession. The rule of such a man's life, is the example of Christ—*walking as he walked.* And to this he is

under an obligation to conform—He *ought* to walk even as he walked. The obligation is four-fold.

First. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *evidence*. Deception, in religious concerns, is not only possible, but common; and the consequences, if the delusion continues, will be dreadful. Hence we should be anxious to know whether our hope is any thing better than presumption; or our safety is any thing more than self-security. If, from self-confidence, we contemn such solicitude, let us remember, that the Sacred Writers command us not to be high-minded, but fear; and to examine and prove, whether we be in the faith. There are, indeed, many proofs of a gracious state; and there are some of a more experimental nature, to which we do well to take heed: but none of them can afford us relief, if they are unaccompanied by an imitation of Christ. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Secondly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *consistency*. The relations and conditions in which we are found determine the propriety of our conduct. When we know what a man is, we conclude what it becomes him to do. A steward is expected to be found faithful; and dishonesty draws upon him censure and condemnation from all. Every one is sensible that a priest and a king should not act like common men; but that a dignified and sacred line of conduct is required by their rank and office. Christians are kings and priests unto God; and therefore they must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. The man who advances peculiar and superior claims to any thing, has no reason, no right to complain, if he be judged by his pretensions. He who wishes to pass as a Christian, avows himself related to Christ;

and by his doctrine and character he must be tried: he ranks himself above all the world; and challenges the inquiry, What do ye more than others?

Thirdly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *usefulness*. He will thus put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. He will wipe off the reproach attached to the Gospel. He will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. He will be the means, by his good works which they behold, of inducing those that are without, to enter the way everlasting. No one can imagine the influence and efficiency of a life entirely Christian. It is a blessing to the whole neighbourhood in which it is displayed. It is like a dew from the Lord, and as showers upon the grass. But by an unworthy and unbecoming conduct, a professor of religion can destroy much good. He causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of. He hardens transgressors. He perplexes the weak. He grieves the strong. He opposes and discourages all those who are labouring to win souls. Woe to the world, because of offences! And woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Fourthly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *gratitude*. We feel and acknowledge the kindnesses shewn us by our fellow-creatures; and, in consequence of it, we endeavour to meet their wishes, and to avoid whatever pains or displeases them: for actions speak louder than words. What has not Christ done for us? See his condescension, when, in the form of God, he took upon him the form of a servant. See his grace, when he was rich, and for our sakes he became poor. See him in the Manger, and in the Garden. See him upon the Cross, lying; and upon the Throne, reigning for us, and making all things work together for our good. And surely we shall feel that a peculiar, a supreme love to him becomes us. And how are we to shew it? Shall we ever grieve his Holy Spirit?—Shall we not

ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—Shall we not pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer?" He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. He that offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God—Upon which, Philip Henry observes, Thanksgiving is well, but thanksliving is better.

If we walk like him now, we shall walk with him hereafter. It is his own promise—"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

SEPT. 25.—"*I will hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.*" Psalm lv. 8.

SUCH was the language of David—And it may be the language of any other good man, in the depth of distress. But is it allowable and proper? There is no perfection here; and there is nothing concerning which we should indulge more tenderness of censure, than hasty expressions, uttered under the pressure of pain or grief. Perhaps it was to prevent our severity here, that the cases of Job and Jeremiah are recorded, both of whom, though eminent in piety, cursed the day of their birth. The Scripture is not harsh upon them; and it is observable, that when James refers to one of these bitterly-complaining sufferers, he only says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." They who have never been in a state of peculiar distress, know little of the feelings of human nature under it. But there are others who can respond to the invitation of sympathy, "Pity

ne, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God ath touched me!" And the Father of mercies knows ur frame, and remembers that we are dust. We re not required to choose suffering for its own sake; r to be indifferent to ease and deliverance. Our aviour himself had not that fortitude which mocks t pain; but that which deeply felt; and yet submitted. With strong cryings and tears he prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: evertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

But what allows of excuse, truth does not require s to commend. It was his infirmity that induced avid to long for death, to hasten his escape from he stormy wind and tempest: and an old writer ells us, it would have been more honourable for im to have asked for the strength of an ox, to bear is trials; than for the wings of a dove, to flee from hem. Is not such language unworthy and ungrateul? Should we overlook and forget all our comforts? *Have* not these been great and numerous? And did re *then* long to flee away?—Yea, *are* they not many nd various even *now?* And shall we only dwell n the dark side? Let us examine again; and let ruth and thankfulness stand by us the while.—And ay they not *yet be* many and great? Afflictions re not immutable dispensations. What changes ften take place, to the surprize, as well as joy, of esponding sufferers!

"The Lord can change the darkest skies;
"Can give us day for night:
"Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
"To rivers of delight."

And is there not unbelief in the case? You re afraid of all your sorrows; and not only of their ontinuance and increase; but of their influence and ffects. You dread lest you should not bear them roperly, so as to glorify God; but sink in the day of dversity, and—sin too. Yet, O thou of little faith!

wherefore dost thou doubt? Is not he *able* to preserve, and support, and comfort thee? And has he not *engaged* to do it? Has he not said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And has not his conduct always accorded with this assurance; both with regard to others, and with regard to yourselves?

"Did ever trouble yet befall,
"And He refuse to hear thy call?
"And has He not his promise past,
"That thou shalt overcome at last?"

More than once you have been appalled in the prospect of a trial; but when the evil day came, there came with it mercy and grace to help. Perhaps you even gloried in tribulation—and you would not refuse to pass through some of those distressing exercises again, to enjoy the same peace and comfort.

Is there not much ignorance and inconsideration in this impatience? How do you know that it is better to escape from these troubles, than to bear them? Not one of them has befallen you by chance. May you not infer the righteousness of them all, from their very Author? Is not his work perfect? and his ways judgment? He doth all things well. Does he detain you in distress because he does not love you? Yea, He loved you with an everlasting love; and withheld not his own Son from you. You may therefore entirely confide in him, assured that if he does not release you, it is because he waits to be gracious; and also equally assured, that blessed are all they that wait for him—for it is good for a man, not only to hope, but quietly *wait* for the salvation of the Lord.

First. Your own welfare may require the process. The Saviour was made perfect, through suffering; and the character of every Christian is more formed and improved from his afflictions, than his enjoyments. What would some of you have lost, had you fled away before such a trying dispensation enriched your faith and hope! How much of your happiness in heaven will arise from a review of your present conflicts on earth! The very trial of your faith is precious: and the crown of life is promised, not to him that *escapes*, but to him that *endureth*, temptation. Afflictions are heavenly agents, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Secondly. The welfare of others may require it also. We are detained here to be useful; and we are often most useful in our trials. Nothing strikes like facts. The passive graces are the most impressive. They are better than a thousand sermons—better, to arrest the careless, to instruct the ignorant, to encourage the timid, to comfort the desponding. It was well Bunyan did not escape from the prison at Bedford, or we should not have had his Pilgrim's Progress, and his Holy War. Paul was a prisoner, and knew that to depart and be with Christ was far better; nevertheless, because it was more needful for the Philippians, he was willing to abide in the flesh, and acquiesced in the adjournment of his deliverance and bliss. And here, *you* also may be wanted. Perhaps you have a venerable mother, and are required to rock the cradle of her age, who rocked the cradle of your infancy. Perhaps you are a parent, and a rising family is dependent on your care, instructed by your wisdom, edified by your example. We all are placed in circumstances where we may prove a blessing: and this is our only opportunity. We may glorify God in heaven; but not in the same way as now—not by submission, patience, and self-denial. This is an advantage we

have above the glorified. They cannot exercise candour, and forgive injuries, and relieve distress, and save souls. Life is ours, as well as death. Therefore, all the days of our appointed time let us wait, till our change comes.

SEPT. 26.—"*And he brought him to Jesus.*" John i. 42.

THESE are few words; but they are very instructive and improving. We may ask three questions.

To whom was he brought? "He brought him to *Jesus.*" To whom should he have been brought, but unto him?—He had the words of eternal life. In vain would he have been brought to the princes of the world; to the philosophers of antiquity; to the moralists of the age; to the Scribes and Pharisees; to Moses; to the law—Moses wrote of him; and the law was a schoolmaster, to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the deeds of the law. To him, says Isaiah, shall men come. To him, said the dying Jacob, shall the gathering of the people be. There alone they can find the wisdom they need; the pardon they need; the peace they need; the strength they need. In him they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—Neither is there salvation in any other.

Who was brought? It was Simon Peter—"He brought *him* to Jesus." He is a character frequently and largely noticed in the Sacred History. For, in consequence of this introduction, he became not only a disciple of Jesus, but a preacher of the Gospel, and an Apostle: and, from the low occupation of a fisherman, he was made a fisher of men; and, by one cast of his net, he gained three thousand souls. Let

us endeavour to bring men to the Saviour, remembering that we know not what he will do, not only in them, but for them, and by them. While he saves them he may also employ and dignify them. However unlikely they at present appear, we may by-and-by observe them, with joyful surprise, and adoring gratitude, not only as Christians, but as ministers in his Church; and extensively serving their generation, according to the will of God. *Whatever* condition they may fill, or office they may discharge, they will be, must be, useful. Like their father Abraham, they will be not only blessed, but blessings. In converting one, we do good to many—Who ever went to heaven alone?

We may also ask—*Who* brought him? It was Andrew—"*He* brought him to Jesus." Andrew had been for some little time with Jesus himself; and he immediately evinces the influence of the intercourse on his own mind, by his concern to bring others to the same Saviour. And there is nothing peculiar in this. They who have seen his glory, will be sure to proclaim his worth. They that have tasted that the Lord is gracious themselves, will be always constrained to invite others—*O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* And they always speak of him best who speak from experience.

Andrew was not only acquainted with Jesus, but he was also related to Peter. *He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him—We have found the Messias.* The expression intimates that he also prevailed upon others, but that he *began* with him. His finding him *first*, might have been accidental; but it is much more probable that it was by design. He thought, and he thought justly, that his own brother had, though not an exclusive, yet a prior claim to his attention: and therefore, while many lead their friends and relations, their own flesh and blood, into the haunts of dissipation, the counsel of

the ungodly, the way of sinners, the seat of the scornful, and so bring them to the Devil; Andrew instantly performed towards Simon, his own brother, a brother's part—And he brought him to Jesus.

Let us not forget this. We are to disregard none of our fellow-creatures; but surely those who are connected with us by the ties of friendship and of nature, have the first right to our solicitude. How is it possible for us to think of them, and not exclaim, with Esther, in the dread of a more tremendous perdition—How can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred? In endeavouring to do good to these, we have also greater opportunities and advantages, by reason of our influence, and ease of access.—Let, then, Grace sanctify, and engage in her service, all the force and endearment of natural affection. Let the pious sister pray for, and plead with, an irreligious brother. Let the godly wife strive to save her own husband. Let the husband allure, to accompany him, the desire of his eyes. And, oh! let parents awaken, and blend their anxieties and efforts, to bring to Jesus their children. When Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, all the wounded were to obtain cure by looking. But children were bitten, as well as men and women. Had we been there, we should have seen many a father leading along his little daughter to a place of vision; and many a mother, pressing near with her infant son in her arm, and pointing his eyes to catch the shining remedy. So has the Son of Man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life—and the young need him; and the sooner they are brought to him the better. The sooner will they be prevented from injuring society: the sooner will they enter on a course of usefulness, during which they will scatter a thousand blessings. If we do good to an old man, it is all-important to himself; but then it goes off with him. Whereas, the good communicated to a child, is

not only valuable personally, but relatively. It descends from him, and is spread by him, as he rises up and multiplies in life: and the result of the whole cannot be estimated.

And if we bring them to him, will he reject or despise them? Let his command determine this—"Feed my lambs." Let his conduct decide it—"And they brought young children to him that he should touch them. And his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them—Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

Let those that *have* children, and let those that *are* children, think of this, and be encouraged.

"A flower, when offered in the bud,
"Is no vain sacrifice."

Another flower thus offered, can never arrive at perfection. It must wither and die. But this flower shall live and blossom as a rose. The Redeemer will put it into his bosom: and the fragrance shall spread through the Church below, and the Temple above.

SEPT. 27.—"*And he brought him to Jesus.*"
John i. 42.

WHAT Andrew here did with Simon, we are to do with our fellow-creatures—We are to bring them *to Jesus.*

But can men be brought to him *now?* Did he not say, I am no more in the world? How happy were they who lived when he was on earth!

They could repair to him in every trouble, and tell him every distress. Ye benevolent neighbours! you could carry the paralytic, and place him beneath the very eye of Mercy. You anxious father! you could go to him, and say, "Sir, come down ere my child die." You Martha and Mary, as soon as Lazarus was afflicted, you could send to him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." And cannot you, my dear readers, cannot you apprise him of your desire or your grief? Have not you, at your disposal, a messenger, that you can despatch to him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? "While they call, I will answer; and when they speak, I will hear." And has he not said, Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world? and wherever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of you? If these words be true, he can be, he must be, he is, with his ministers and people now. Though no longer visible, he is accessible. We may apprehend him as to his essential presence, by which he fills heaven and earth. We may apprehend him, also, as to his peculiar presence, by which he is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. He is to be found in the Scriptures. In his House. At his Table. On his Throne. In the garden and the field—

> "Where'er we seek him he is found,
> "And ev'ry place is holy ground."

But can *we* bring souls to him? Not efficiently. This is the work of God only. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And the sooner we are convinced of this, the better. We shall then make all our attempts in dependence on the agency of his Spirit; and thus honouring him, he will honour us. But we may do this instrumentally. For God makes use of means: and he employs *men*; and employs them not only

to do good to their fellow-creatures temporally, but spiritually—Not only to relieve their bodies, but to save their souls. And various and many are the ways in which we may thus bring men to Jesus. We may do it by intercession; for he hears prayer for others, as well as for ourselves. We may do it by the influence of example. Nothing speaks so loud as the silent eloquence of a holy, consistent, and lovely life. By this, wives may win their husbands without the word; and servants may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. By this, *all* may be useful. All cannot be learned; all cannot be rich: but all may be exemplary. We may do it by instruction. Thus Andrew brought Peter—We have found, says he, the Messias. And thus the woman of Samaria brought her neighbours, saying, Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did: Is not this the Christ? By a word fitly spoken—a letter—an invitation to hear the Gospel—the commendation of a good book—the diffusion of the Bible—the sending forth missionaries—the supporting of ministers, whose office it is to turn men from darkness to light—By all these, and many more, we may be the means of introducing souls to Jesus.

But *why* should we be concerned to bring them? Four things should make us alive to this work. First. To feel a concern for it is an evidence of grace. There cannot be a better. Indeed, every other evidence is fallacious without this: and this is always to be found in a real Christian. For however he may walk in darkness, as to a knowledge of his own interest in divine things, and draw the conclusion that he has no part nor lot in the matter; he never is insensible and indifferent to the success of the Gospel and the salvation of souls. This makes the eye sparkle upon whose lid hangs the shadow of death. Secondly. To attempt it, is a duty. A duty that cannot be declined, without the greatest guilt. A duty arising from the relation in which we stand to

our fellow-men, as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. A duty enforced by the will of God, clearly made known in the injunction, As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men—for what good can equal this? Thirdly. To accomplish it, is the most glorious enterprise. What is the rescue of a whole nation from civil bondage, compared with the deliverance of one soul from the power of darkness, and translating it into the kingdom of God's dear Son! Can a trifle throw heaven into ecstasy! But there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The work, therefore, is its own motive; its success is its own recompence. And so the Apostle deemed it—"If a man err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Fourthly. To fail in it, is no disgrace. Yea, failure here is infinitely more honourable than success in any other enterprise. But wise and good efforts are never in vain. If they are useless as to the direct object, they do good collaterally. If they relieve not the beneficiary, they bless the benefactor. His prayers and endeavours return not void into his own bosom. We are a sweet savour of Christ, not only in them that are saved, but in them also that perish. The promise is not made to success—for *this* does not belong to us; but to exertion. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

But while we endeavour to bring others to Jesus, let us see to it that we have come to him ourselves. It is awful to think of being the instruments of his grace, while we are not the subjects—

"Great King of Grace! my heart subdue;
"I would be led in triumph too:
"A willing captive to my Lord,
"And sing the victories of his Word."

SEPT. 28.—"*The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!*"
Lam. iv. 2.

SUCH is the difference between the judgment of God and the spirit of the world, concerning the precious sons of Zion. In the estimation of God, (and his judgment is always according to truth,) they are comparable to gold, yea, fine gold. And they are so for their rareness, and their purity, and their value, and their durability, and for their bearing the severest probation, and, instead of being injured by the trial, deriving improvement, and lustre, and usefulness from it.

But, as that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God; so that which is approved and commended of God is undervalued and despised by men. The world, therefore, knoweth them not. It knew *Him* not. Their Lord and Saviour was despised and rejected by them. And they, as his followers, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. They judge only from sense and outward appearances; and Christians are often poor and afflicted. They see the outside of the Tabernacle; and this is covered with goats' skins and badgers' skins, dyed red: but they never enter the holy place, nor approach Him who sitteth between the cherubims. They are sensual, not having the Spirit; and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. They do not feel their need of the blessings which constitute the happiness and glory of the children of God, and therefore prize not the possessors of them. Yea, the carnal mind is enmity against God, and causes them to dislike every thing that bears his impression and likeness.

Yet even these despisers shall behold, and wonder, and perish. When the delusions of time shall

give place to the unveiled realities of eternity, they will be compelled to exclaim, *We* fools counted their lives madness, and their end to be without honour. How are they numbered with the saints, and their lot is among the children of God! Yea, even now there are moments, when, if we could witness the workings of conviction, we should hear many a Balaam admiring, and praying—How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

Christians should not be uneasy and impatient under the mistakes and reproaches of their adversaries. It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment—He that judgeth them is the Lord. Their praise is not of man, but of God. They should know that this is not their day. Their day is coming. It will be the manifestation of the sons of God. Yea, conscious of what, by the grace of God, they are, they should learn in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content. In every thing they should give thanks. Their souls should make their boast in the Lord. They should never scruple to extol and recommend their privileges and excellencies. That which we have heard and seen, says the Apostle John, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. And is this desirable? And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Who is on the Lord's side? O my soul! art thou? Dost thou love and admire those whom God approves and honours? Canst thou call the saints that are in the earth, The excellent? and say, In them is all my delight? Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

"Oh! may I see thy tribes rejoice,
"And aid their triumphs with my voice:
"This is my glory, Lord, to be
"Join'd to thy saints, and near to Thee."

SEPT. 29.—"*Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.*" Micah ii. 10.

ONE of the old Divines, in his pastoral admonitions to his people, exhorts them—not to look for that in the Law, which can only be found in the Gospel—not to look for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ—not to look for that in the creature, which is only to be found in the Creator—and not to look for that on earth, which is only to be found in heaven.

The present is not our rest—It was not *designed* to be our rest—It is not *fit* to be our rest—And if we are Christians, we have *relinquished* it as our rest, and have chosen another.

Yet who does not need this exhortation? Our souls naturally cleave unto the dust. Many, like Reuben and Gad, prefer an inheritance on this side Jordan. And even the godly themselves, who have not their portion in this life; but have said, As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness; even these need to have their pure minds stirred up, by way of remembrance. "My people," says God, "have forgotten their resting-place."

He therefore, who takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, sends them this message, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." And there are five messengers by which he sends it.

The first, is his Word. And we should read and hear it for this very purpose. It meets us in

our complaint and inquiry, "Who will shew us any good?" and says, "Acquaint now thyself with *Him*, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." It forbids us to lay up treasures on earth. It commands us to seek those things that are above. It denounces the curse and misery of making flesh our arm. It proclaims the grandeur of the soul; and sets before us what alone is worthy of it. It leads us into all truth; and places us at the foot of the Cross, by which the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world: and then we are enabled to say—

"Farewell, world! thy gold is dross;
"Now I see the Saviour's Cross:
"Jesus died, to set me free
"From the law, and sin, and *thee*."

The second, is affliction. God speaks by the rod, as well as by the word. While he chastens us with his hand, he teaches us out of his law. Has he not, by events, plainly addressed us, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain; turn ye, and take your journey"? Has he not, by repeated frustrations of our hope, plainly said to us, "Let it suffice thee: speak no more to me of this matter"? Perhaps our purposes have been broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts. Perhaps we have been made to possess months of vanity by sickness. Perhaps lover and friend has been removed far from us. And, amidst the wreck of every thing dear to us, a voice, though we knew not at first that it came from Heaven, said, "What hast thou here? and what dost thou here?"—And if we are so much attached to the world, with all our losses and distresses, what should we have been without them? If the pilgrim be ever seduced from his way, it is by flowers and prospects; if ever he sits down, and sings himself asleep, it is in a pleasing scene, and in fine weather—not when the sky is dark and stormy, and the road is rough and

niry—for then, by contrast, the thought of home ecomes dearer; and he feels an excitement to uicken his pace.

The third, is worldly success. This, in some spects, may convince us more of the insufficiency nd emptiness of every thing here, than even our leprivations. When a man is unable to attain his bject, he may still imagine that there *is* hapiness in what he misses; and that he is miserable ecause he misses it. But when he has gained the rize, he is convinced that the dissatisfaction he feels rises from the nature of the thing itself. We long or certain acquisitions, with all the fondness of hope; nd feel no apprehension, unless on the side of failure. Ve cannot believe, from the acknowledgments of thers, that these things will belie expectation, and till leave a void within. But when we have made the rial ourselves—when we have formed the connexion, lled the office, gained the fortune, we desired—and, a the midst of our sufficiency, we are in straits; re sigh over our indulgences themselves; and enyment, as well as affliction, cries, All is vanity and exation of spirit—Arise, and depart; for this is not our rest.

The fourth, is the earnests and foretastes of a etter world. And such, Christians are favoured ith, in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; in accesses o the Throne of Grace; in the power and glory f God, which they see in the Sanctuary; and in ose sacred moments of Divine communion, alone, hen they can say,

> "While such a scene of sacred joys
> "Our raptur'd eyes and souls employs,
> "Here we could sit and gaze away
> "A long, an everlasting day"—

nd these not only call, but allure and win the heart, way. When the clusters of grapes were brought o the Israel of God in the Wilderness, they said, in

very intelligible language—What does your present condition supply like this?—See what grows in the land that is before you. Taste; and go up and possess it.

The last, is death. Every apprehension and approach of this, cries—"It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." But it orders us to depart really, as well as morally. Thus God, indeed, sends, by it, not only *to* his people, but *for* them. And it seems surprising that they should ever be ready to turn away from the messenger. A child at school welcomes every messenger from home *to* him; but he desires most the messenger that comes *for* him. Joseph sends to Jacob, and for him, at once; and his father not only heard the words, but saw the waggons—"Oh! these are really to carry me to him—I shall soon see my son—and die in peace."

Such a messenger, Christian, is death to you. Come, says God; you have toiled long enough—You have feared long enough—You have groaned long enough—Your warfare is accomplished—Enter the rest which the Lord your God giveth you—Come; for all things are now ready.

Yes; you will soon hear the voice saying—O Israel! you must this day go over Jordan. And why should you be unwilling to exchange the desert for the land flowing with milk and honey? Is not this the purpose of your travels? The end of your desires? The completion of your hopes?

"But the swelling river rolls between." Fear not. The ark of the covenant will go before you, and divide the waves; and you shall pass over dry-shod. Or, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, your feet shall feel the bottom; and your eyes see the "shining ones;" and you shall land safely. And then let the streams re-unite, and continue to flow on—you will not wish them to re-open for your return. What is misery to others, is joy to you—"I shall go the way whence I shall not return."

SEPT. 30.—"*If then I be a father, where is mine honour?*" Mal. i. 6.

WE admire the Scripture mode of allusion and comparison. Its images are taken from the most obvious and simple things: and while they illustrate the spiritual subjects to which they are applied, they also impart moral lessons. While they enjoin the duties we owe to God, they remind us of those we owe to our fellow-creatures. Thus the child is instructed and reproved, by the address which informs and admonishes the Christian.

In the words before us, here is, first, a principle supposed—Indeed it is expressed in the foregoing sentence: "A son honoureth his father."—It is a dictate of Nature, of custom, of observance in all ages and countries. The child, as soon as he can reason, finds himself under the control of a superior, at once dear and venerable; to whom he is obliged, and on whom he is dependent: he asks of him information; he looks to him for provision; he confides in his care and wisdom; he obeys his orders, and submits to his discipline. If stricken, he does not reproach, or think of striking again. What says Solomon? "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." A modern writer has made free to turn these words into ridicule, by ranking them with those senseless bugbears by which nurses often terrify children. But if the ignorance of infidels, with regard to every thing scriptural, was not extreme; he might have known, that, under the Jewish law, filial disobedience was a capital offence. "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him." And Moses mentions also the mode. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey

the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." Hence, what is threatened, might have been literally accomplished. But when we consider how figuratively the Easterns expressed themselves; we may admit the reality of an awful penalty on the transgressor, without pleading for the literal execution.—We have a remarkable instance of filial honour in the regard the Rechabites paid to the authority of their father. "They said, we will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents: that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us." It is lamentable to think how little of this obedience is to be found in children now. Yet there is far less piety in the world, than morality.

Here is, secondly, an obligation inferred—It is, that if other fathers are to be honoured, we are much more bound to honour God. For he is a Father far

ove the truth of the relation in all other cases. We ve had fathers; but they were fathers of our flesh—t he is the Father of our spirits. They were fathers ly subordinately, and neither the sex, or the form, the talents of the child resulted from their choice—t he is supremely, efficiently, absolutely our Father -he made us—and endued us with all our powers—d from him must spring all our hopes.

And, therefore, not only is the reality of the rela-on found in him, but the perfection too. He always ts the part of—a wise and good Father—and always ts it completely—divinely. Other fathers often chas-e their children for their own pleasure; but He for r profit. They may be implacable; but He is ready forgive. They may neglect to educate or provide; t He teaches us to profit, and suffers us to want good thing.

The duty also is enforced by the eminence of is character, and the grandeur of his condition. is understanding is infinite. His power is almighty. is dominion is everlasting. He is Lord of all. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, d the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; at stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and readeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that ringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the dges of the earth as vanity." To this consideration e himself appeals, in the close of this chapter. "But rsed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a ale, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a rrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the ord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the eathen."

Thirdly. Here is a complaint alleged. "If I am Father, where is mine honour?" And has he no round for this inquiry? Men often complain with-t cause. They are unreasonable in their demands d expectations. They may be mistaken with regard

to the nature and design of many actions, because they judge after outward appearance. But God's claims are unlimited. He sees motives. He looketh to the heart. He takes our meaning. And, passing by our mistakes and infirmities, accepts and commends our aims and endeavours. And yet he complains. And how deeply deserved! and how extensively applicable is the charge he brings! See the generality of mankind—Have they any concern to please him? Take the professors of his religion—What do they more than others? Take even the subjects of his grace—even in them, Where is his honour? Is it here? in constantly asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Is it here? in meekly submitting to his rebukes? Is it here? in speaking well of his Name, and recommending him to others?

Let us make the deficiencies and sins of others a mirror in which to behold our own. Do I meet with ingratitude in a fellow-creature, that I have relieved? Let it soften my resentment, and keep me from resolving to do no more for him. Let me inquire how *I* have behaved towards my Heavenly Benefactor. Do I reflect on an undutiful child, and perhaps justly too? Yet let me ask whether my Heavenly Father has not much more reason to condemn me—If *thou*, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, *who* should stand!

How necessary is it for us to fall down at his footstool; and pray, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified!

What a blessing is the Gospel, that assures us, with the Lord there is mercy, and that his grace is sufficient for us!

Yet let this make us the more concerned to honour him—and to be harmless and blameless; the children of God—without rebuke!

OCTOBER 1.—"*Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.*" Amos v. 18.

WE may apply this to the day of death. How often do men, when in trouble and disappointment, express a wish, that God would now take away their life from them, supposing that it is better for them to die than to live! We cannot, indeed, be always sure of the sincerity of their desire; and they may not be sure of it themselves. Under the pressure of present feeling, they may imagine that death would be welcome; when, perhaps, if it actually appeared, they would decline his aid. And if they *would* not, they *ought*. For *their* fleeing from trouble, is as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

Let me, then, beg these sons of sorrow to inquire —whether the event they long for will be a real remedy for their complaints. Are they sure that death will be annihilation?—perfectly sure that there is nothing beyond the grave?—Can they prove that there is no future state? and that in this state there is no misery—but happiness only? Judas hanged himself. And what then? He went to his own place. This was far worse than his former condition, even under all the horrors of remorse.

If the Scripture be true, *all* are not happy at death. Yea, *none* are then happy without a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. And have *you* this title? Where is it? What is it? "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Have you this meetness? What is it? Do you love holiness? Without this, *could* you be happy in a holy place? in a holy state? in holy company? in holy engagements? in holy enjoyments? Is the Redeemer precious to your

souls? and do you delight in him? Without this, *could* you be happy, to be for ever in his presence, and hearing for ever his praise? *Could* a man, without a ear or taste for music, be happy, by being removed into a world of melody and harmony? Need you be told, that happiness does not arise from the excellency of the object, but from its adaptation to our disposition? That nothing can make us happy, but what relieves our *wants?* fulfils our *desires?* and satisfies our *hope?* Without holiness, therefore, *no* man *can* see the Lord.

How absurd, then, is it to wish to leave this world for another, before you are sure the exchange will be for your advantage!—For your advantage it cannot be, if you die unpardoned and unrenewed. Blessed are the dead that die *in the Lord.* But out of Him, you are out of the city of refuge, and the avenger of blood is upon you. Out of Him, you are out of the Ark, and in the midst of the Deluge. No; the day of *your* death is not better than the day of your birth—Whatever your privations, and losses, and distresses, here may be, they are only the beginnings of sorrow; and all you suffer from them is only as a drop to the ocean, compared with the damnation of hell.—And, once gone from time, there is no return. As the tree falleth, so it lies.

Instead, therefore, of wishing this only and all-important season ended, you should be thankful that it is prolonged, if it be continued, even in a vale of tears; and account, that the longsuffering of God is your salvation: for he is not willing that any should perish.

Remember, also, that these disappointments and sorrows, which make you so impatient, may prove the greatest blessing; and the valley of Achor be given you for a door of hope. For God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He renders earth desolate, to induce you to seek a better country. He strikes away every human prop,

nd puts failure and vexation into every worldly scheme, that you may turn from idols to the Supreme Good—

"What should I wait or wish for, then,
"From creatures—earth and dust?
"They make our expectations vain,
"And disappoint our trust.

"Now I forbid my carnal hope,
"My fond desires recall;
"I give my mortal interest up,
"And make my God my all."

— Away, then, with every thought of the rope or he river. Say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father" —He is in sight, waiting to receive thee graciously, nd to love thee freely. Repair to the Throne of he Heavenly Grace—You cannot spread your sorows *there* in vain. If tempted to despair, try his vord. No one ever trusted, and was confounded. Cry, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." 'Come," says the Reliever of every burden—"Come nto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy-laden, nd I will give you rest."

The Athenian said, "I should have been lost, if had not been lost." What made the Prodigal hink of home, but want? Where did Manasseh ind his father's God, but in affliction? We often eel for those who have been reduced; and say, hey have seen *better* days—But if in their proserity they forgot God that made them, and lightly steemed the Rock of their salvation; and in their dversity have thrown themselves into his arms—hese, these are the *best* days they ever saw; and hey will draw forth their praise for ever. This, ay suffering friend, may be your case—and will be, ' you seek unto God, and unto God commit your ause. He can, he will turn the shadow of death nto the morning—and you shall join the multitude ho are saying, IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I HAVE EEN AFFLICTED.

OCT. 2.—"*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*" Psalm lxxxv. 8.

AND surely if *He* speaks, in whatever way he expresses himself, it becomes us to hear; and to hear immediately. Let us not therefore "be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." There are four cases in which we should adopt this resolution.

First. I will hear what God the Lord will speak, as to *doctrinal truth*. If error were harmless, we should not be commanded to "buy the truth, and sell it not:" to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good." It is of unspeakable importance to have proper sentiments on all religious subjects. But concerning all these subjects, different opinions prevail; and it is certain that all these opinions cannot be true. Hence persons are often perplexed, especially at the beginning of the Christian life. And what in this case are we to do? One cries, Lo! here is Christ; and another, Lo! there. Be it so. We are not left without witness. It would be sad and dangerous had we no rule to go by; no standard to which we could appeal. But we have such an advantage. And in things of moment it is plain and obvious. And it is accessible—it is in our possession—it is the testimony of God, recorded in the Scriptures. I will therefore make no system of divinity, drawn up by fallible creatures like myself, my oracle; but enter at once the temple of Revelation, and inquire there. I will call no man master upon earth—one is my master, even Christ; and all besides are only brethren. I need not ask what Arminius, or Calvin, speaks—they themselves are to be judged out of this Book; and what they deliver is no further binding upon me, than as *they* can say, "Thus saith the Lord." "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because

there is no light in them." "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." In this Inspired Volume I have the judgment of God himself upon every subject with which it is necessary for me to be acquainted. And I will go to it; not with a previous bias, but open to conviction: not to dictate, but to learn. I will not be influenced to embrace a doctrine, because it is easy of comprehension; or to reject it, because it is mysterious—It is infinitely reasonable to believe *whatever* God speaks: and my only concern is to ascertain what he *has* spoken.

Secondly. I will hear what God the Lord will speak, as to my *movements in life.* How ignorant and short-sighted are we! How liable to mistake! How incapable of distinguishing between appearances and realities; and of deciding what will be good or evil for us! Surely we have erred and suffered enough already, to convince us that "the way of man is not in himself." How much depends on one wrong step, as it regards our comfort, usefulness, and reputation! Even when the iniquity is pardoned, the natural consequences may be long left to operate. They often cannot be remedied; and so repentance is quartered upon the offender all his days. How frequently has this been exemplified in irreligious marriages; and changes of residence and business, through fancy, pride, or avarice; or even good, but mistaken motives! A Christian, therefore, should take every step of importance—and what step may not be important?—feeling a responsibility that makes him tremble; and an anxiety that urges him to seek counsel from above—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak"—and regulate my marches by the cloud. But while I wait upon God, I must also wait for him: and integrity and uprightness are to preserve me while I do so. For He tells me, that if a man sets up idols in his heart, and comes to inquire of him; he will answer him, but "according to his idols." And this is done, not only by a penal

influence; but by a natural effect: for every thing will be coloured according to the passion through which I view it. If therefore I do not consult God sincerely, it would be better for me not to do it at all: for it can only dishonour him, and delude myself. But if I go in simplicity, and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" I come within the reach of the promise, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Thirdly. I will hear what God the Lord will speak, as to the *dispensations of his providence.* Nothing is more trying than, what an old Divine calls, "a dumb affliction:" so that when we put our ear to it, we can seem to hear nothing, as to what it implies, or intends. Varying the metaphor a little, Job was in such a state of ignorance and perplexity: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right haud, that I cannot see him." In such a condition, it affords relief to be able to add: "but *he* knoweth the way that I take." Yet duty requires that *we* should have some knowledge of it ourselves. A natural man is only concerned to escape from trouble: but the Christian is anxious to have it sanctified and improved. He is commanded to hear the rod. While God chastens, he teaches. I must therefore be in a learning frame of mind. I must say unto God, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me"—"I will hear what, by this event, God the Lord will speak."

Fourthly. I will hear what He will say, also, *in answer to prayer.* Here is a thing, I fear, generally disregarded. How many petitions are never thought of after they have been delivered! We knock at the door, and go away, and never even look back to see whether it be opened unto us. Can we expect that God will attend to those prayers which we con-

tenn ourselves? Are such addresses any thing better than a mockery of the Supreme Being?

Let us therefore hear what he says in reply to our requests. Is it not pleasing to know that we are not forsaken nor forgotten of our best Friend? To be able to rectify a gloomy conclusion? To reason from the past to the future? And, like a beggar, to derive encouragement from success? "For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee." "I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

OCT. 3.—"*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*" Phil. iv. 5.

— WHAT moderation? Moderation with regard to your appetites. Some make a god of their belly, and glory in their shame. Many indulge in eating and drinking, beyond the demands of bodily refreshment, or the allowances of health.—Your moderation, with regard to your passions. You are to be angry, and sin not. The sun must not go down upon your wrath. The fear, the joy, the love, the grief, allowable in themselves, may become excessive in the degree.—Your moderation, with regard to the distinctions of life. These are to differ from "the

pride of life"—in apparel, in furniture, in servants. —Your moderation, in professional pursuits, and the cares of trade—diligent in business, but not "entangling yourselves in the affairs of this life;" content with sober and solid gain; and not, by hazard and speculations, making haste to be rich.—Your moderation, in the exaction of rights; whether pecuniary—in declining the rigour of law, for debt; or personal—in waving the claims of authority and preference, as Abraham did in the case of Lot.—Your moderation, in your opinions and zeal. Many things in religion are of far less importance than others, even if true—But as to the truth of them, this is not easily ascertained; and we see men of equal talent and piety on each side of the question. The truth generally lies in the middle; and he is commonly nearest to it who is abused by both the opposite parties.

And what a reason is there to enforce this admonition!—"The Lord is at hand." The word signifies nigh, either as to place or time. If we take it as to place—it refers to his presence—I am a God at hand, and not afar off. He is about our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. Thus he is always nigh to see and observe, to aid or oppose, to bless or to punish.

"O may these thoughts possess my breast,
"Where'er I rove, where'er I rest:
"Nor let my weaker passions dare
"Consent to sin—for God is there!

—If we take it as to time—it refers to his coming—"The coming of the Lord drawing near." This is true, not only as to the certainty of the event, and the confidence of faith; but as to his real approach. If the Lord was at hand when Paul wrote this Epistle, how much more now two thousand years have rolled away! But he comes by death—And

this, as to consequence, is the same to us, as his coming to judgment. And there is but a step between us and death.

— If a multitude of people were assembled together, and behaved tumultuously, and the king was coming along the road—"The king is at hand," would instantly reduce them to order and silence; and every eye would be turned towards *him*. If a number of criminals, forgetful of their condition, were improperly amusing themselves, or striving together; and a signal told them, the judge was entering the town to try them—what an effect would this instantly have upon their mind and their conduct! But what is your case? He is not only your Sovereign, but your Judge—And, "behold, the Judge STANDETH BEFORE THE DOOR!"

How lamentable is it, that to enforce what is wise, and just, and good in itself, we should need such motives—and that these motives, after all, should have so little influence over us! That we should be constantly reminded of such a Being—led back to the grace of his first coming—and forward, to the glory of his second coming—and think, and feel, and speak, and act, and live, as we do! "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

OCT. 4.—"*The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*" Prov. iv. 18.

WHAT does this fine image imply? What does it express? Solomon traces the resemblance between the path of the just and the rising light, in three articles. Each *shines*. Each shines *more and more*. Each shines more and more *unto the perfect day*.

The rising light *shines*. It is the very nature of it, to do so. It thus shews itself, and renders other things visible: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Without this, the works of the field, and the human face divine, would be all a blank—but the shining of the light lays open their beauties, and fills us with admiration and praise. Thus the Christian's path breaks out of obscurity; the darkness is past; and the true light shineth. His religion is not only real, but apparent. And as it need not, and should not be hid; so it will not, and cannot be hid. Its operation will evince its existence. Its principles will display themselves in its practice. There will be the work of faith, and the labour of love, and the patience of hope, and the fruit of the Spirit. Pity will get into the eye. Meekness will smile in the features. The law of kindness will dwell upon the tongue. The hand, ready to communicate, will unawares slide into the pocket—They that were in darkness will shew themselves; and, in a thousand ways, their light will shine before men.

— But the *shining* of the rising light is noble and glorious. It is one of the most splendid appearances in nature. The rising sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber—We hardly wonder the poor Heathen, in the absence of Revelation, should worship it—The lustre is often too powerful for the naked eye. And how was it with Moses, after communion with God? His face shone so that the Israelites could not stedfastly behold the glory of his countenance. He was not aware of it himself, till, seeing the people dazzled, he was obliged to take a veil. And the humility of the Christian may keep him from perceiving his own excellencies: but others will take knowledge of them: and his profiting will appear unto all men. And nothing is so impressive and influential as the life of a Christian, when he walks worthy of the vocation wherewith

he is called. It was not necessary for the first believers at Jerusalem to lay down rules, to exclude improper characters from their communion—Their purity, their dignity, their majesty, repelled them—"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but all the people magnified them."

—Yet the *shining* of the rising light is not mere lustre. It is a source of usefulness, as well as of admiration. It warms and enlivens. It fertilizes the gardens and the fields. It makes the valleys to stand thick with corn, and the little hills to rejoice on every side. And so Jesus went about doing good. And so Christians are blessings in all the places wherein they move. Let us make this image our model in our endeavours to serve our generation. The sun says nothing—It does good without noise—It shines unasked, constantly, impartially—It rises on the evil, as well as on the good—So may we be merciful.

But the shining light shines *more and more.* So does the path of the just. His religion is a gradual and progressive thing. We therefore read of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. Of the Thessalonians, it is said, Their faith grew exceedingly; and the love of every one of them towards each other abounded. As far as we are stationary in our attainments, we are censured and condemned by the image. But to derive comfort from it, it is not necessary that we should be every thing at once. Nothing in nature reaches its perfection suddenly. The babe proceeds, by slow degrees, into the man. The blade precedes the full corn in the ear. Let us not despise the day of small things. What was the oak once, but an acorn? What is the dawn, to the noon?

But the shining light shines more and more *unto the perfect day.* The allusion is not taken from a meteor, that blazes for a moment, and then disappears. Nor from the morning cloud and early dew,

that soon passeth away: but from the rising sun, that always attains its end, and completes what it begins—rising upwards—and shining—onwards—till it is day—perfect day.

When did the sun ever make a dawn, and not carry it into full day? Who can drive him back, or stop his course? If it had enemies, and they cursed its beams, the rage would be as vain as it would be unreasonable—"He rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." So shall it be with all those who are set in motion for eternity by Divine grace. "They that love Him shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." There is no enchantment or divination against them. In all opposition they shall be more than conquerors. He who is the author, shall also be the finisher of their faith. They shall soon lose all their infirmities. They shall emerge into perfect knowledge, holiness, and joy—And "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR."

But who can help recalling the beautiful lines of Dr. Watts, which, though written for the infant mind, are worthy the perusal of angels?

"How fine has the day been, how bright was the sun,
"How lovely and joyful the course that he run;
"Though he rose in a mist when his race he begun,
"And there followed some droppings of rain!
"But now the fair traveller 's come to the west,
"His rays are all gold, and his beauties are best;
"He paints the sky gay, as he sinks to his rest,
"And foretels a bright rising again.

"Just such is the Christian—his course he begins,
"Like the sun in a mist, while he mourns for his sins,
"And melts into tears; then he breaks out and shines,
"And travels his heavenly way:
"But when he comes nearer to finish his race,
"Like a fine setting sun, he looks richer in grace,
"And gives a sure hope, at the end of his days,
"*Of* rising in brighter array."

OCT. 5.—"*Who is gone into heaven.*" 1 Pet. iii. 22.

—MANY had gone there before. Abel was the first that entered; and it is encouraging to think, that the first victim of death was a partaker of glory—human nature being found in heaven, before it was seen in hell. How long he was alone there, we know not. But others soon followed: and our Saviour must have found there, a multitude which no man could number.

But though many had gone into heaven before, none of them had gone in the same way and manner with himself. Others had entered without their bodies; but he had entered incarnately. Two had indeed entered embodied; but they did not take their bodies from the grave. Enoch and Elias died not, but were only changed. Jesus died, and was buried; and passed to glory from the tomb. Others entered heaven by mere favour, presenting no claim from their worthiness and obedience: but he entered by merit—He deserved all the glory he obtained—It was no more than the reward of his doing and suffering. Others entered as private individuals; and their entering did not ensure the entrance of others—not even of their friends and relations. Religion is a personal thing: and it could not be inferred, that because the husband or the father was glorified, the wife or child would follow. But he entered as a public character, as the head and representative of his people: and because he lives, they shall live also. Hence says the Apostle, "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up, and made us sit together with him in the heavenly places."

It is expedient for us, therefore, that he went away: and as Joseph's going from the prison to the palace was not only his own advancement, but the salvation of his father's house; so Jesus is gone into heaven, not only to be crowned with glory and honour, but to execute the remainder of his mediatorial work, on behalf of the redeemed. "For if,

when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." But did he not say, when he expired, "It is finished?" He did—and it *was* finished—and nothing could be *added* to it. But *what* was finished? The procuring of salvation only—not the application of it. The former was done upon the Cross: the latter is done upon the Throne. What he suffered to acquire, he is exalted to bestow. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Even in his priestly character, it behoved him not only to suffer, but to enter into his glory. The Apostle therefore says, If he were on earth, he could not be a priest; because he could then only have fulfilled one part of the office. For the high priest not only offered the sacrifice, but entered the holy place—and sprinkled the blood upon the mercy-seat—and burned incense—and made intercession for the people. Jesus therefore, after dying for us, entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us—"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Here he fought, and overcome. But the Conqueror must have his triumph. He must display his spoils, and enrich the multitude. He therefore ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

He was a prophet, by his own preaching. But

local, how confined, and successless, was his
nal ministry! The work was to be done by
ıer ministry. Corporeally, he was to withdraw:
;" said he, "the Comforter, which is the Holy
t, whom the Father will send in my name, he
teach you all things, and bring all things to
remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto
"I have yet many things to say unto you,
ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he,
Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into
ruth: for he shall not speak of himself; but
soever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and
ill shew you things to come." Thus *he* con-
ed his personal presence and agency far inferior
e dispensation of the Spirit. And yet some are
ng for his bodily advent again, as if this was
ect what the Holy Ghost could not accomplish.
t purpose is to be executed in the spread of the
el; or the conversion of souls? or the glorifica-
of the Church? to which the energy of the Spirit
t adequate? Not by might, nor by power, but
y Spirit, saith the Lord.—Were he here in his
, he would be confined to one place at a time,
many would envy the honour of seeing him, in
But in his Spirit, he can be everywhere, and
ved of all at the same time.

OCT. 6.—"*I am a stranger with Thee, and a rner, as all my fathers were.*" Ps. xxxix. 12.

ife was viewed and felt by David. He was very
rior to many of his ancestors. He had wealth,
power, and honour, and reigned the greatest
arch of the East. But no condition can make the
of immortality a citizen here. Others are stran-
and sojourners, as to the transitoriness of their

continuance in this world, and the certainty of their removal from it; but not as to their disposition—They mind earthly things: and would be glad to live here always. But the child of God is, in principle, what he is in fact; and in experience, what he is in destination. He is also born from above, and bound for glory. And though he is detained here in a foreign land for awhile, for the discharge and the management of certain duties and interests; yet he thinks, even while thus engaged, of leaving it, in due time, for his own country—where his best relations reside—where lies his inheritance—and where he is to dwell for ever.

"There is my house, my portion fair;
"My kindred and my friends are there,
"And my abiding home:
"For me my elder brethren stay,
"And angels beckon me away,
"And Jesus bids me come."

Am *I* a stranger and a sojourner with God? Let me realize, let me exemplify, the condition. Let me look for the treatment such characters commonly meet with. Like widows and orphans, they are often imposed upon, and wronged, and injured. They are turned into ridicule and reproach, because of their speech, their dress, their manner, and usages. And Christians are a peculiar people. They are men wondered at. The Saviour tells them not to marvel if the world hates them; for they are not of the world even as he is not of the world. This treatment is, in reality, a privilege, rather than a matter of complaint. It is when I am admired and caressed, and I find every thing agreeable in my circumstances; it is then I feel something of the *settler*. But the disadvantages of my state make me think of home. These induce me to arise, and depart hence, because this is not my rest.

And surely if any of my own nation be near *me, I* shall be intimate with them. We all know

he heart of strangers. We all feel the same prefernces. The same hope inspires us. The same end nites us. We shall speak often one to another. We hall contrast our present with our future condition. Ve shall inquire when we heard from home, and hen we think of departing for it—and thus beguile he hours, and relieve the absence.

And let me not be entangled in the affairs of this fe. Let me keep myself as detached as possible om things which do not concern me. Let me not mbarrass myself, as an intermeddler and busy-body, i other men's matters. But let me study to be quiet, nd to do my own business. Let me pray for the eace of the country through which I am passing. nd be thankful for every advantage I enjoy in my emporary exile.

And let my affection be set on things that are bove, and my conversation be always in heaven. et me be—not impatient for home; but prizing it; nd longing for it; and judging of myself by my elation to it. Who has not joined in the proverbial entiment "Home is home, however homely?" We ead of some Swiss soldiers on foreign service, who ere so affected with a song that vividly recalled o mind their native valleys, and the houses in which hey were born, that the officers were obliged to orbid the use of it.—But, oh! my Father's house! Iere, toil; there, rest. Here, trouble; there, joy and ladness. Here, darkness; there, light. Here, sin; here, spotless purity. Here, the tents of Meshech nd Kedar; there, the spirits of just men made perect, and the innumerable company of angels, and the ord of all. "With such views," says Dr. Goodwin, let who will be miserable, I will not—I cannot."

OCT. 7.—*"I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."* Ezek. xxxiv. 15.

THIS is spoken of the subjects of Divine grace.

Individually considered, they are called sheep, to remind us of their personal qualities; their weakness, meekness, gentleness, harmlessness, patience, and submission. Some, in their afflictions, toss like a wild bull in a net. Lay hold of a swine, and the neighbourhood is alarmed. But observe the fleecy sufferer. She indeed palpitates. And the Christian may palpitate—and tremble—and be ready to faint; but his very manner silently says, I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me—Let thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

— *Distinctively* considered, they are not all sheep. Many of them are lambs. But these are sheep in nature and degree; and are equally dear to the Shepherd, with the older parts of his charge—Yea, he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom; and gently leads those that are with young;—or have young, as the margin is; and leads them thus—because of the lambs. Lowth renders it, "The nursing ewes he will gently lead." And we are persuaded that the force of this tender image applies to the lambs, and not to the mothers. If the latter were driven on fast, the former could not keep up with them, especially in rough ground; and thus losing their maternal supplies, would droop and perish.

— *Collectively*, they are a flock. And *one* flock only: according to our Saviour's words, "One fold, and one Shepherd." Whatever differences there are among them, they are only the differences of sheep, and of lambs. What difficulty is there in believing this? Essential sameness is not destroyed by circumstantial distinction. Unity is is not incom-

patible with variety. Many branches make but one tree; many members but one body. Bigots would banish harmony from the Church of God; for there can be no harmony where all the sounds are the same. God promised that he would give his people one heart and one way. And our Lord prayed that his followers might be one. Have this prayer and this promise been fulfilled? We dare not suppose the contrary: but if they have, we may see what kind of *oneness* was intended—Not a oneness of opinion; not a sameness in forms of worship, and modes of discipline: for these never have been found: but a oneness, a sameness consistent with the variations that have obtained among them. A unity of spirit. A community of principles. A fellowship of privileges—all being redeemed by the same blood; justified by the same righteousness; renewed by the same grace; and joint heirs of the same glory. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

And is this flock ever forsaken, or forgotten, by Him? "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." But tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, *where* thou *feedest; where* thou makest thy flock to *rest at noon.* For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

> "Fain would I feed among *thy* sheep;
> "Among *them* rest, among *them* sleep."

What says David? "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters."

This is grace. What is glory? What said the angel to John? "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst

of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

There is another flock in the world. This consists of goats. They also have a shepherd. It is the Devil: and they are taken captive by him at his will. He also has under shepherds to do his work; and to him they are amenable; and what a reward will he render them! But his flock, his direful flock—what food! what repose have they! What in time! What in eternity! The way of transgressors is hard. The end of these things is death—the second death. And if any of them should be intermixed with the flock of Christ, and escape detection here—"before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

OCT. 8.—"*But in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*" Phil. iv. 6.

THIS is a simple and pleasing account of prayer—It is the making of our requests known unto God. He indeed knows them perfectly before we express them. But he will know them from us, that we may be properly affected with our own wants, and prepared for the displays of his goodness and grace. And the Apostle reminds us of three things very worthy of our attention, with regard to prayer.

First. It is the prevention and cure of care. "*Be careful* for nothing—*but* in every thing, by

prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." All feel anxiety to be a galling load. But the question is, how are we to disencumber ourselves of the burden?—All acknowledge the disorder: and many remedies have been prescribed, by way of remedy. But if some of them touch the paroxysm of the complaint, none of them reach the root of the malady. The commonness of the case; the brevity of time; the uselessness of giving way to solicitude; and the injurious effects of it: all these are true and proper—but they do not go far enough. The fact is, if *we* are not to be careful, some one *must* care for us. And the thing is, and nothing less than this can tranquillize the mind; to be under the management of *Him*, who loves us better than we love ourselves, knows unerringly what is good for us, and is able to make every thing conduce to our welfare—"casting all our care on Him; for he careth for us." And this is done by prayer. Hezekiah took the letter, and went and spread it before the Lord. Hannah poured out her heart before God, and her countenance was no more sad. In whatever has befallen or foreboded him, every believer has made the trial, and been able to say, with Asaph—"But it is good for me to draw near to God."

Secondly. It is to be very extensively, yea, universally performed. Not in some things, or in many things—but in *every* thing, by prayer and supplication, we are to make known our requests unto God. Some only pray when God's chastening hand is upon them. In their affliction they seek him early. And this, as far as it goes, is not to be censured. Many, like Manasseh, have first sought God in trouble. Prayer is peculiarly seasonable in distress. But though prayer may commence in affliction, it is not to cease with it. It is not to be confined to it. Prayer is equally needful to preserve and sanctify us, in prosperity. It is not praying on extraordinary occasions, but on common ones, that evinces a pious frame of

mind. Do we delight ourselves in the Almighty? Do we always call upon God? In all thy ways, says Solomon, acknowledge Him. It is thus alone we give God the glory of his universal providence; not thinking, with the Assyrians, that he is the God of the hills only, but also of the valleys; and that a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our Heavenly Father; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Some imagine that many things are too little to be the subjects of prayer. A distinction is indeed to be made between the particularity and minuteness of *private* and *public* prayer—But let us remember, that we are not to consider any thing too little for our prayer that God does not deem beneath his notice. And also, that it is difficult, if not impossible for us, in many cases, to ascertain what is little; as events the most important often hinge on circumstances apparently the most trivial. Joseph's going to inquire after the welfare of his brethren on the plain, seemed a slight thing. Yet he, that morning, took leave of his father for more than twenty-one years; and went a way by which he never returned. Saul sought his father's asses—a thing that seemed devoid of consequence; but perhaps he is now in hell, owing to it—for then began his prosperity, which destroyed him—then Samuel met him, and anointed him king over Israel. You go out, not knowing what a day may bring forth, as to your happiness or misery—Before the evening, you may meet accidentally with a connexion that shall prove a source of joy or suffering through life. "Why this is enough to make one live and move in constant trembling." This is not the design of it—but it *is* designed to induce you—in every thing to commit your way and your works unto the Lord.

Thirdly. It is to be always attended with a pleasing companion—But in every thing, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God. And does not this imply,

that we can never approach God without having cause for gratitude? Hence it is said, in every thing give thanks. Whatever be our condition, we have much more to be grateful for, than to complain of—Complain! What can ever justify this? Why should a living man complain, a man, for the punishment of his sin? Let our losses and afflictions be what they may, He has not dealt with us after our desert, nor rewarded us according to our iniquity. Yea, the trials themselves are the effects of love, and designed to work together for our highest welfare.

— And does it not teach us, that whenever we go to God to ask for fresh favours, we should be sure to acknowledge the reception of former ones? How seldom is this the case! How much selfishness is there, even in our devotions! How much more of our worship is occupied in petition, than in praise! Urged by our necessities, we go, and call upon God in prayer; but when we have succeeded, we forget to return to give him the glory that is due unto his holy Name. Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Where is even Hezekiah? *He* rendered not according to the benefit done him.

OCT. 9.—"*I did know thee in the Wilderness, in the land of great drought.*" Hosea xiii. 5.

THIS "Wilderness" means the vast desert in which the Jews wandered for forty years, between Egypt and Canaan. It is characterized by one attribute—"A land of great drought." And this was enough to render it trying. But it was in every respect formidable and repulsive. Witness the language of Jeremiah: "Neither said they, Where is the Lord

that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the Wilderness: through a land of deserts, and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt."

But *here* God says, "I knew thee." It cannot mean a mere acquaintance with their condition and circumstances; for what can be hid from *Him?* But it intends two things.

First. He knew them there, so as to provide for them. Thus it marks his goodness; and forms a contrast with the conduct of many of our fellow-creatures. A friend is born for adversity: and to him that is afflicted, pity *should* be shewed from his friend. But, alas! this is rarely exemplified. They who were intimate enough with their connexions before, scarcely know them when they are in distress. The flower which, when fresh and fragrant, was put into the bosom, is, when withered and dry, thrown away. The garden which, while yielding every kind of gratification, is constantly visited, is deserted in winter. But it is otherwise with God. Though he never leaves his people, he has peculiarly promised to be with them in trouble. David acknowledged this: "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." And has he not known our souls in the same state? Has he not been better to us than our fears? Has he not proved himself "a very present help in trouble"? So it was with Israel—He found them in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness. The situation afforded them no supplies, but he allowed them to want no good thing. He led them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night—healed the bitter waters of Marah—fetched them honey out of a rock, and oil out of the flinty rock—rained down manna upon them—suffered not their raiment to wax old upon them, nor their foot to swell in travelling—vanquished their enemies—gave them ordinances—and sent his Holy Spirit to instruct them—

so that Moses well said, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord!"

Secondly. He knew them there, so as to approve of them, and acknowledge them. It is undeniable that the word *know* has this meaning, when it is said, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." "If any man love God, the same is known of him." "Know them that labour among you." But *did* God *thus* know them in the Wilderness? Not absolutely, but comparatively. They followed him out of Egypt, and not one lingered behind. At the Red Sea they sang his praise. At Sinai they cheerfully and unreservedly acceded to his Covenant. And though they were guilty of many perversenesses and rebellions, yet they never wholly relinquished his worship, and established idolatry and wickedness by a law, as they afterwards did in Canaan. While we dwell on imperfections, God loves to make the best of things. Sarah spake unadvisedly with her lips; but she uttered one good thing—she called Abraham, Lord; and this only is mentioned. Job cursed the day of his birth: but when James refers to him, we hear only of the patience of Job. And observe God's *gracious* testimony concerning Israel at this period: "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the Wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was, holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord."

Adversity will not, of itself, secure godliness. Persons may be reduced, and not humbled. They may be afflicted, and God not know them in their distress. Yet, in general, if you observe others, and review your own experience, you will find times of affliction have been more friendly to religion, than seasons of ease and prosperity.

First. When has God known your conscience

most wakeful, and your heart most watchful against sin? Before I was afflicted, says David, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.

Secondly. When has God known your souls most weaned from the world, and willing to leave it? When all was agreeable and inviting? or when every thing conspired to tell you, that this is not your rest?

Thirdly. When has He known you value most, the communion of saints; the means of grace; the preaching of the Word? When did your eye bedew your Bible? When, pressing the Sacred Volume to your bosom, did you say, Unless thy laws had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction?

Fourthly. When has He known you most frequently and earnestly addressing the Throne of his Grace? In their affliction they will seek me early. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. Even the Saviour himself, being in an agony, prayed more earnestly. "O my people," says he here—"you and I were better acquainted in the Wilderness, when you were in a low condition. You were then left to my immediate care; and you lived daily by faith. Then you made me many a visit—But now we seldom meet."

—Such is the effect of indulgence, and of fulness. He therefore immediately adds, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."

Oct. 10.—"*And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.*" Numb. x. 12.

If the Jews, as the Apostle assures us, were our ensamples, in nothing do they more represent the experience of Christians, than in their progress from Egypt to Canaan.

— They had now continued many months in the wilderness of Sinai, where the Law was given, and all the ordinances of divine worship were established. There they had committed idolatry, and provoked the Most High to anger: and there he proved himself the just God and the Saviour. He forgave their iniquities, but took vengeance on their inventions. They were now to enter the wilderness of Paran, a vast desert of nine days' journey; and where the greater part of their subsequent stations were fixed. "And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran." *Thus they only marched from one wilderness into another.* And is not this the case with all our changes in this world? Let us look at a few of them; and we shall see, that whatever they may promise—as to satisfaction and happiness—they leave us much the same as they find us.

Is it not so when we pass from one *period* to another? Every age has been full of complaints; and here it is remarkable, instead of supposed improvement, the inquiry has always been, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?"—We end one year with a kind of gloom, and hail the arrival of another: but the months are found the same with those which had previously passed away. The winter is not without cold, nor the summer without heat.—We feel in our early days the confinement of school, and the restraints of a father's house: we long to be at our own disposal, and to enter life for ourselves. But where is the man that has not exclaimed, "O that I was as in the days of my youth!"—Much is said of an agreeable and peaceable old age. Who does not desire many days, that he may see good? yet is their strength labour and sorrow. Another girds, and leads us whither we would not. In vain we look around for our early and endeared connexions—

Lover and friend is put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness. The days are come, in which we say, "I have no pleasure in them." "All that cometh is vanity."

Is it not the same when we pass from one *residence* to another? There are few but have known local changes; and some, by a train of events, have been led to pitch their tents in situations the most remote from all their former expectations. Sometimes a removal is not at our own option. In other cases it seems very inviting and desirable. It may have preferable claims. But still it is a removal *in* the Wilderness—not *out* of it. To Abraham, God said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will tell thee of;" and this was the Land of *Promise*—Yet even there he shared in the troubles of his nephew, Lot—went for years without an heir to his wealth—was tried in offering up his son Isaac—and buried his Sarah out of his sight, in the cave of Machpelah. There, by faith, he sojourned as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles—not at home, but looking for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Is it not the same when we go from one *condition* to another?—Many deem it a fine thing to pass from obscurity to splendour—forgetful that distinction and fame will draw forth envy, and excite evil speaking, and deprive us of the sweets of retirement and leisure. David rose from a shepherd's cottage, to the grandeur of a palace—and then sighed, "O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest." How wise was the Shunamite! When Elisha offered to speak for her to the king; "I dwell," said she, "among mine own people."—Some deem it a great thing to rise from indigence to wealth. By their eagerness to acquire it, all seem to think, if they could have affluence, they should want nothing. But does a man's life consist in the abundance of the things which he

possesseth? His desires increase with his means; and in the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits.—The same may be said in passing from activity to leisure. "Oh!" says one, "when I have acquired so much, and can withdraw from the world where I have been so tried, I *shall* be happy." But to withdraw from the world is not so easy. Habits form a second nature. Few are qualified either to improve, or to enjoy solitude. No kind or degree of exertion, is so much at variance with happiness, as having nothing to do. Ennui is an insect that preys upon all bodies at rest.

> "And *Satan* finds some mischief still,
> "For idle hands to do."

He found David alone; and Eve alone.—It is the will of Nature and Providence that we should pass from individual into social life; and Solomon says, He that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord. And the conjugal condition, wisely and piously entered, in a general way, admits of more happiness than any other. But it may produce the keenest anguish. At best, it cannot yield pure and unalloyed felicity—our affections become sources of anxiety and fear—we share the pains, as well as the pleasures, of those who are one with us—and every delightful tie is mortal.—How impatient are some to enter the parental relation! Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. But the proverb truly calls them, certain cares, and uncertain comforts. How often do the father and mother mourn over undutifulness, depravity, an early grave! Childhood and youth are vanity.

"This is a very gloomy view of things"—But is it not a true one? a Scriptural one? And if so, should it not check presumption and vain confidence? should it not inspire sober and moderate expectation,

with regard to every earthly scene—in those who are just entering life?—or those who are on the verge of any change in it?

Is there, however, nothing to encourage and comfort under such a dispensation? Much every way.—Such a state of things is not *casual*—"And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran." Therefore, though they removed from one desert into another, it was under the Lord's guidance and conduct. He determines the bounds of our habitation, and administers all our comforts and our crosses.—Such a state of things we are not *unapprized of:* and therefore, if we go on, buoyed up with hopes, which must issue in disappointment, the fault is our own. All history, observation, experience, and Scripture, tell us enough to prevent it.—Such a state, too, is not *peculiar* to us—It has been known by all our brethren who were before us in the world, and will be realized by all those who come after us.—Nor is it our *final* state. Another is discovered and promised. There remaineth a rest for the people of God: a better, even a heavenly country—A few more stages, and we shall remove to the glory of all lands—no thorns there—no dangers there—After all our movements in the Wilderness, we shall move out of it; and the days of our mourning will be ended.—Neither is it an *unmixed* state. If this earth is not heaven, it is not hell: if we are not in Canaan, the desert we are in, is not like Egypt, from whence we came out. Like the Jews, we have many advantages and comforts, though the place itself yields us nothing. We have the fiery cloudy pillar; and water from the rock; and the manna; and Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; and the grapes from Eshcol; and God himself, "even our own God," who is nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for. Yea, the very difficulties, mortifications, and distresses of the state are *useful*. They try us, and humble us, and

do us good with regard to our latter end. But for these, how unwilling should we be to go. How vain would the admonition be, "Arise and depart;" unless it were enforced with the conviction—"This is not our rest."

Let this, therefore, keep us from the murmurings of discontent, and the forebodings of despondency. Though serious, let us not be gloomy. And while free from delusive hopes, let us not yield to unbelieving fears—but thank God, and take courage.

Oct. 11.—"*And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*"
Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

— From another Scripture, it would seem that he ascended from Mount Olivet. But there is no contradiction here. The same eminence is intended—On the one side of it, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he suffered; on the opposite side, stretching down to Bethany, he was received up into glory. And we see the latter was some considerable distance from the former: for, of the attendants at his ascent, it is said, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey."

Thither he seems to have led his disciples, for the sake of abstraction and privacy. He had said before his death, "The world seeth me no more." They had seen him, and believed not. To what purpose should other proofs be displayed before those on whose minds all his miracles had made no impression? And here was a sufficient number to attest the fact: and reason cannot question the

competency of these witnesses, either as to capacity or sincerity.

But how wonderful and pleasing is the manner in which he took his leave! His disciples had often tried him. They had always betrayed great imperfections; and, after all their professions of attachment to him, as soon as he was apprehended, they all forsook him, and fled. He might well have cast them off: but he loved them unto the end: He might have forgiven them; and yet have left them unseen—or silently—or with a frown—or with a rebuke—and this would almost have broken their hearts: but "he lifted up his hands, and blessed them!" Thus proclaiming the most cordial forgiveness; thus assuring them, that they might rely on his remembering them when he was come into his kingdom.

Dr. Priestley is much perplexed about his present residence and employment. It would appear, he says, from some intimations in the Epistles, as if he still had occasionally something to do with the Church; but what this is, we cannot conjecture. And there is no doubt, says he, but he is now somewhere on earth: for what relation can he have to any other planet?—But *we* are assured that, while he blessed his disciples, he was parted from them, "and carried up into *heaven*." Where this is we are not informed. But it is obviously a place: for he was clothed in a body like our own; and, corporeally, he cannot be everywhere. But wherever he *thus* is, there is heaven. And this accords with his own language—"I go to prepare *a place* for you." And though heaven is to be considered *more* as a state than a place; and though even now our happiness does not depend essentially upon local situations; yet these have their importance—And what beautiful and enchanting places have we seen, and heard of, and imagined! But "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God

hath prepared for them that love him." What a residence was Eden, before the fall of the first Adam! But this fell infinitely short of the excellency of the abode of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven—

"Oh! the delights, the heavenly joys,
"The glories of the place,
"Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams
"Of his o'erflowing grace!

Well, let us think of him where he now is; and let us inquire what is our duty with regard to him. Hear Paul—"Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We need not be afraid to own him—for he is able to take care of us however we may be exposed. We need not be ashamed to avow him—for he has every thing to induce us to glory in him. Some comparative excuse might be made for Peter. When he denied him, he was a prisoner at the bar, and going to be crucified, as a malefactor. But where is he, when we deny him? In the midst of the Throne —crowned with glory and honour—the Lord of all.

Let us follow him in our thoughts and affections. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not *here*. He is in heaven: and where our treasure is, there should our hearts be also. Let us therefore have our conversation in heaven; and seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. There, some of us have much to interest us now—We seem more related to another world than this—and, reflecting upon our losses, we sigh, and say, "What do I *here?* and what have I *here?*" How many among the blessed can we reckon up, who we feel are drawing us after them! But here is the principal attraction—

"Jesus, my all, to heav'n is gone;
"He whom I fix my hopes upon:
"His tract I see, and I'll pursue
"The narrow path, till him I view."

And let us rejoice in the expectation of being for ever with him. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." The anchor that holds the ship is cast out of it: and our hope must go out of ourselves. The anchor lays hold of something invisible: and our hope enters heaven. Yet it would find nothing as the ground of its grasp *there*, if *he* was not there—But he *is* there—and there for *us*—and *his* being there, insures *our* arrival. He is the forerunner of the whole company: and said he, as he entered, "I am come; and all my people are coming." Unless we are there also, he would be disappointed—for he prayed, Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, to behold my glory. He would be unfaithful—for he said, "Where I am, there shall also my servants be." He would be imperfect—for he is the bridegroom, and they are the bride; he is the head, and they are the members of his body.

O blessed confidence! let me feel thy influence in every duty and in every trial. Henry, after a sweet representation of the place, exclaims, "If this be heaven, O that I was there!" How matchlessly simple and affecting does Bunyan end his story of Christian and Hopeful, after they had passed the river, and approached the Shining City, the object of all their solicitude!—"Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them. And beheld the city shone like the sun. The streets, also, were paved with gold. And in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps, to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one to another, without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord.' And after that, they shut up the gates—WHICH WHEN I HAD SEEN, I WISHED MYSELF AMONG THEM."

Oct. 12.—"*I am the good Shepherd.*" John x. 14.

To prove, or rather to exemplify his goodness, let us consider his sheep in three periods and conditions; and observe his conduct towards them in each.

First. See them in their *natural* state. Thus they were fallen and guilty creatures; in want and danger; and ready to perish. Here his goodness appeared in undertaking their cause, and engaging to be their Shepherd. For nothing but goodness could have induced him to do this. He was under no power or authority to constrain him—He was influenced by no application or desire in the subjects of his pity—And he was not ignorant of what the interposition would cost him. He knew that if he would be their Shepherd, he must bleed and die. What says the Church? "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." What says he himself? "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—And all this he suffered, not complainingly, but with inexpressible alacrity and pleasure—I delight to do Thy will—How am I straightened till it be accomplished!—Nor was this all. After he had redeemed them by his blood, he had to search, and find them; and bring them from their wanderings into his fold. Hear his own representation—He goeth after that which is lost in the wilderness until he find it. Well, and when he has traversed the desert, weary, and wounded by the thorns and briers, and has found it; what does he? Does he complain of his privations, fatigues, and sufferings? No: he layeth it on his shoulder REJOICING: and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice *with me;* for I have found the sheep which was lost.

Secondly. View them in their *restored* estate. Here his goodness appears in making such ample

and rich provision for them. For he does not bring them into barrenness—They shall not want—I will feed them in a good pasture.—It appears in affording them repose, as well as food. For they want rest, as well as supplies, especially at noon. And, says he, I will not only feed my flock, but cause them to lie down—He maketh them to lie down in green pastures.—It appears in recalling them when wandering—He restoreth my soul, says David.—It appears in defending them—They shall never perish, says the Shepherd, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.—It appears in accommodating himself so kindly and tenderly to their age and weakness—"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Thirdly. See them in their *final* state. *Here* he does much for them; and they are often deeply affected with it, especially when they consider where he found them, and what they once were. But when they look into his promises, they see that he intends to do infinitely more. How great is the goodness which he has laid up for them that fear him! Earth is too narrow to contain it. Time is too short to display it. It doth not yet appear what they shall be. There is a land of pure delight; a better, a heavenly country, prepared to receive them. There is, indeed, a dark valley to pass, before they can enter it—But it is safe—and short—and their Shepherd is with them there; and his rod and his staff will comfort them. And when they have passed it, "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Blessed Jesus! how well hast thou said, "I am the good Shepherd"!

Oh! let those that belong to him, love him, and

honour him with their confidence. Trust in him at all times, ye people. Resign to him all your interests. It is enough that he careth for you. You know his aim. You know that all his ways are mercy and truth.

But are we a part of his charge? Are we sheep? Are we lambs? How may I know this? They are marked—marked in the *ear*—and marked in the *foot*. My sheep *hear* my voice—and they *follow* me.

Oct. 13.—"*And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*" Mal. iii. 17.

If a man spares any one, it will surely be his own son. The very relation pleads for him. Even a faulty child is a child still; and is not easily turned out of doors, like a servant. Absalom had risen in rebellion against his father; and David was compelled to fight with his own son—But, Oh! said he, on the eve of the battle, deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom! Who can imagine his feelings, while thinking of the action! With what hope and fear was his parental bosom fluttering, when the messenger arrived with the result! Who does not seem to hear his very heart-strings break, as he goes up into the chamber, weeping, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—But when a son is dutiful; and the father sees that he desires, and aims, and endeavours to please him! Now this is the image God here employs, to raise our confidence the more. I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. In the same strain is our Saviour's tender appeal: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good

gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" God's own children, who serve him, need sparing mercy. It is exercised towards them four ways.

First. He spares them as to exemption. This has often been seen in times of public and general calamity. Does the flood come and sweep away the world of the ungodly? An Ark is provided for the saving of Noah and his house. Are the Cities of the Plain destroyed? Lot is sent forth out of the overthrow. Darkness that might be felt enveloped the Egyptians; but the Israelites had light in all their dwellings. When the executioners were approaching Jerusalem, Set a mark, said God, upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that are done in the midst of the land. Some of his servants are taken away from the evil to come. Pious connexions removed by death, are often spared the sight of relative troubles, under which, perhaps, they would have sunk. Many a pious youth, like Abijah, has come to an early grave in peace, and been housed from after-storms—The Heathens said, They whom the gods love, die young. How often has he spared us—spared our lives, our senses, our limbs, our substance, our relations and friends—with regard to all of which, we must gratefully acknowledge, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

— Secondly. He spares them as to correction. As his Word tells us, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son;" He will not himself refuse to strike, when it is needful. Whom the Lord loveth, he therefore chasteneth—But how? What is the prayer of his people? O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. And he hears them; and spares them as to the degree of the affliction. "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he

stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." They are afflicted, but they have alleviations. It might have been much worse; it is so with others. One comfort is gone; but many remain. Cast down, but not destroyed. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." For the same holds with regard to continuance—he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." See an instance of this sparing goodness expressed with incomparable tenderness, with regard to Ephraim: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Thirdly. He spares them as to exertion. He considers their strength, and will not require of some, what he ordains for others. A father, in his family, would not impose upon an infant, the service he would lay upon the young man. To some, in Thyatira, the Lord said, I will put upon you none other burden. The children are tender, says Jacob: and the flocks and herds with young are with me; and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock would die. How much does this remind us of another, of whom it is said, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." When our Saviour was blamed for not enjoining fastings on his disciples, he replied: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and

the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." There is, says Henry, in well-doing, an over-doing; and such over-doing, as may prove undoing. Many religious people are blameable here. They expect too much to be given up before persons have realized the comforts of the Holy Ghost. They want to effect every thing at a stroke. They forget their own ignorance and slowness when God began to deal with them—They forget Him who does not despise the day of small things. They forget Him who said to his followers, I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now.

Fourthly. He spares them as to acceptance. Their best actions are imperfect. Their holiest duties are defiled. Their obedience needs pardon. To whom does not this apply? Nehemiah had done much for the cause of God: but does he appeal to justice, to reward him? No; but to mercy, to forgive him: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." Paul, after extolling Onesiphorus so highly, prays that even he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. I am looking, says the great John Howe, dying, for eternal life; not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner. Where is the Christian, however distinguished his attainments, who, even in looking over his Sabbaths, and his communions at the Lord's Table, and every alms-deed he ever performed, is not constrained to pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified"?—Well; he will spare you, as to your deficiencies in duty. He takes the design. He regards the motive. He looketh at the heart. He will pardon what is yours; and reward what is his own. For he views you and your services through the mediation of his dear Son, in whom he is well-pleased. Ah! *he spared not him, that he might spare you.* If we sin, we have an Ad-

vocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. And as God said to Job's friends, so he says to us—"My servant shall pray for you, and him will I accept; lest I deal with you according to your folly."

—Never forget the goodness and kindness of God. He is your Father—and he will spare you.

But spare not yourselves. Mind no labour; no expense in his cause. Deny yourselves. Take up your Cross, and follow him fully—follow him whithersoever he goeth.

OCT. 14.—"*According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.*"

Hosea xiii. 6.

IN this and the former verse, God places Israel before us in two situations and conditions—The Wilderness, and Canaan. He reminds us of his knowledge of them in the former; and of their disregarding him in the latter. He commended them in their low estate; but had to complain of them in their prosperity—"I did know thee in the Wilderness, in the land of great drought." But, delivered from the privations and hardships of the desert, they entered the Land of Promise—the glory of all lands—a land of wheat and barley—a land of vineyards, and fig-trees, and pomegranates—a land wherein there was no scarceness—a land flowing with milk and honey. And what was the consequence?

First. Selfish indulgence—"*According* to their pasture, *so* were they *filled.*" And was this sinful? We plead for no monkish austerities. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it

be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." He "giveth us richly all things to enjoy." But the enjoyment of Christians differs from the excess of the sensual. We are not to feast ourselves without fear. We are not to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. We are not to throw the reins on the neck of appetite; and feed ourselves to the full. The mistake of many is, that they suppose every thing is their own; whereas nothing is their own. They are only stewards of the manifold grace of God. They think they may sleep as much as they like; dress as much as they like; consume as much as they like: but the Scripture is our rule, and not our own inclination. There is the cause of God, and of the poor, to be thought of, as well as our own gratification. The first lesson in the school of Christ, is self-denial—Where, in the lives of some, does this ever appear? Temperance is one of the graces of the Spirit—And does this consist only in avoiding the grossness of drunkenness and gluttony. No; but in not "*filling* ourselves *according* to our pasture."

Secondly. Pride—"They were filled, and their *heart was exalted*." This was the case even with Hezekiah: even *he* rendered not according to the benefits done him; for "his heart was lifted up." And, by charging them that are rich in this world not to be "high-minded," nor to "trust in uncertain riches," the Apostle shews the tendency there always is in worldly success, to gender vanity and false confidence. Hence it is said, "Pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment." They even think more highly of their understanding—as if their wisdom grew with their wealth. They speak with authority; and answer roughly.

Thirdly. Unmindfulness of God—"Therefore have they forgotten me." And how common is it for men,

in the midst of their sufficiency, to lose the sense of their obligations to God, and dependence upon him, and need of him. Hence Agar prayed against being rich; "lest I should be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" Hence the caution to the Jews, at their taking possession of all the good things in Canaan: "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." But, alas! the admonition was unavailable. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked. Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

This gives us a very humbling view of human nature. Is it possible for us to consider it as so innocent, so amiable, so noble, as some would represent it to be? View it, not as it appears in the dregs of society; but as it is seen in common and reputable life, and in what are called—"the better sort" of people. See men able to bear nothing without abuse—evil, because God is good—drawn from him, by the very things which should lead to him—ungrateful, in proportion as they should love and praise him—and even converting his gifts into weapons of rebellion against him! Lord, what is man!

Let the fact arouse us to caution and circumspection, if Providence smiles upon us, and we are placed in easy and agreeable circumstances. Yea, let us not only watch, but pray, lest we enter into temptation. Let us seek that grace which can alone enable us to manage a full estate properly, so as to elude its snares, and discharge its duties. *Then* we shall see, that what is impossible to men, is possible to God. It was said of Vespasian, that he was even the better man for being an emperor. So there are some, whose prosperity, instead of destroying them, displays and increases their excellency; and

they are not only rich in temporal things, but rich in faith, and rich in good works. These instances, however, are rare.

— And the perils of the condition should check our eagerness after worldly affluence and ease. Why do we envy those that rise? Because we attach an undue value and importance to their acquisitions. Yet these possessions are not only transient; but unsatisfying; and vexatious; and corrupting. Yet, regardless of the testimony of Scripture, and all history and experience, how many, even professors of religion, crave and pursue them as if they were the supreme good. But seekest thou great things unto thyself? seek them not. Bring your mind to your condition; for you never will be able to bring your condition to your mind. Your desires will enlarge with your indulgence; as fuel adds to the fierceness of the flame—Therefore let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Learn also resignation under afflictive dispensations, either in crossing your schemes, or in reducing your resources. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." It was said of Moab, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." The Prodigal was more favoured—a famine drove him home. Manasseh was mercifully ruined—in his affliction he sought the Lord God of his father, and He was found of him. And He gives you the valley of Achor for a door of hope. Do not think hardly of Him, under whose discipline you now are. He knew your danger; and interposed to prevent it. He has hedged up your way with thorns; but it is to keep you from following lying vanities,

and forsaking your own mercies. He tries you; but it is for your profit. He sees what you can bear. And He who loved you, so as to give his own Son for you, will suffer you to want no good thing.

Oct. 15.—"*And the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.*" Deut. v. 28.

Thus He expressly mentions his having *heard* what they had *said* to Moses. It is equally true that he hears all we say; and has heard all we have ever said. This is a solemn thought; especially as he has heard all our words, not as an unconcerned auditor, but as a witness and a judge. How many of them have we forgotten! But they are all in the book of his remembrance. And, says the faithful Witness, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Here, the words which God had heard, were the words of religious avowal—"Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and *we will hear it, and do it.*" And he has heard all our religious resolutions and engagements. First. Our more private ones; when we have been impressed alone—with regard to such a temper, that we would watch against it—with regard to such a temptation, that we would pray for grace to resist it—with regard to our time, that we would redeem it—with regard to our substance, that we would honour the Lord with it. And, secondly, with regard

to our more public and solemn ones: when we joined ourselves to his people; and went to his Table; and, over the memorials of dying love, said, "Henceforth by Thee only will I make mention of thy Name—

'Here, in thy House, I leave my vow,
'And thy rich grace record;
'Witness, ye saints, who hear me now,
'If I forsake the Lord.'"

I have heard, says He, the voice of the words of this people. And adds, with approbation, containing in it complaint—"They have well *said* all that they have *spoken*." But talking and doing are two things. Even with regard to ourselves, one of them goes a very little way without the other—Yea, it rather offends—it adds insult to injury. We scorn a flattering profession, contradicted by actions—Actions, we say, speak louder than words. What is lip-service in religion! Judas gave our Lord the lip—called him Master—and kissed him—and betrayed. Ezekiel's hearers extolled his preaching, and brought others to admire him: but their hearts went after their covetousness—They heard his words, but did them not. So David testifies of these Jews—"When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned, and enquired early after God—Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." And so here. They spoke well in expressing their readiness to hear and to do. But God, who knew them better than they knew themselves, immediately exclaimed—"O that there was such a heart in them."

— Speech is one of the most uncertain criterions by which we can judge of character, either as to the reality or degree of religion. From education, reading, and hearing, persons may easily learn to talk well. They may even surpass others, who are far

better than themselves: as an empty vessel, when touched, sounds louder than a full one; and as a shallow brook is more noisy than a deep river. Some speak little, especially concerning themselves, from a fear of deception; and a concern, lest they should appear to others above what they really are. Baxter, in his life of Judge Hale, says, For a time, I feared he was wanting in experimental religion, as he seldom spoke of his own spiritual views and feelings. But upon better acquaintance, I found I was mistaken. He had heard, from many in his times, so much hypocrisy and fanaticism, that he was urged towards the extreme of silence. And it is the better extreme of the two. Christians feed on the hidden manna: and have a white stone, with a new name in it, which no one readeth save he that receiveth it. Would it not be better for some to talk less of their high confidence, and their wonderful ecstasies, before those who are weak in faith and comfort? and who are in danger of being depressed by comparison? How assuredly do some speak of the time when they were "enlightened," or "converted;" as if they could ascertain the period of the second birth as exactly as that of the first! Might it not, sometimes at least, be better to speak of the fact with less decision? and always to consider the work, not so much done as doing? or to pray that it might be done—as David did—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?"

To how many individuals will the words before us apply! Here is a champion for the truth. He has defended its purity and importance. He has contended earnestly, and, as far as argument and evidence goes, wisely, for the faith once delivered to the saints. He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*. But where is the Spirit of Truth? the meekness of wisdom? the mind of Christ? Every page of controversy ought to have at the top, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and at the bottom,

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Another has entered the Sanctuary of God, and, in language equally beautiful and true, has acknowledged, We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep—we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts—there is no health in us. And he has well *said* all that he has *spoken*. But where is the broken heart, and the contrite spirit? How often, after these confessions, is the sermon, founded upon them, disliked, and the preacher of it condemned! Here is a third. He has gone to his brethren in distress, and justified the ways of God to man. But does he justify God's dealings with himself in trouble? He has well *said* all that he has *spoken*—But he reminds us of the language of Eliphaz to Job—"Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy works have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled."

But men may mistake themselves, when they do not mean to deceive others. They are often, at the time, as sincere, as they are earnest. The young; the afflicted in the hour of distress; the sick, and the dying; express many things which are as true as they are good, according to their *present* feelings. But they do not distinguish between impulse and disposition; between outward excitement and inward principle. Hazael, at the prediction of his cruelties, ignorant of the change that power would produce in him, really execrated the character, he became. Peter was presuming, but not false, when he said, Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. The disciples supposed themselves established in the faith, beyond the danger of temptation to forsake him, when they said, "Now we believe." But Jesus answered them—O that there was such a

art in you!—"Do ye now believe? Behold, the our cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scat-red, every man to his own, and shall leave me one: and yet I am not alone, because the Father with me."

Oct. 16.—"*And there are also many other things hich Jesus did, the which, if they should be written very one, I suppose that even the world itself could ot contain the books that should be written. Amen.*"
John xxi. 25.

his is the language of the writer of this Gospel, concluding his narrative. After all that he had rought forward, much more remained behind. He ad composed a memoir, rather than a history: and nly furnished a few specimens of a subject, bound-ss in itself.

Yet the expression he employs in asserting this, ay seem to many surprising, if not confounding. here are two ways of solving the difficulty.

First. The language is a figure; a strong hyper-ole. This was very common in the East. Indeed, it frequent with writers and speakers in all countries. ven in our familiar discourse, we often, without eing aware of it, express ourselves as remotely from ruth, if *absolutely* considered—"I am tired to death." I have no strength left." "Every body knows it." uch a thing is—"provided at the shortest notice"—hich would be a moment. But no deception is ntended: and no danger of mistake follows.

— Yet, secondly, though this meets the difficulty, ome have also a little altered the rendering, and read —not, the world would not *contain*; but would not *eceive*, the books that would be written. So Dod-ridge and others. This is allowable in criticism:

but let us observe the justness of the inference. If all the particulars of his birth and infancy, and youth, and manhood; if all the occurrences of his private and public life; if all his actions, his miracles, his speeches, his prayers, with all their relative circumstances; if all these had been recorded—instead of a book, we must have had books; and books so—large, and—many, that the design must have been counteracted. For then—there were no books but were in manuscript. And who would have had leisure to transcribe them? Who would have taken the trouble?—If they were purchased from transcribers, who would have endured the expense? They could only have been the property of the very rich.—And when they had become their own, who could have had time to read them? Who could have remembered them all? How multiplied would have been the difficulties requiring explanation! All these would have been, with men, reasons or excuses for not procuring; or not perusing; or not understanding them.

Therefore, each of the inspired lives of our Saviour himself, is not so long as many a sermon. The four put together are far shorter than the published account of many a modern, insignificant character. But let us not complain or lament, that the whole is so compendious and brief. It is not a defect, but an excellency. The wisdom and goodness of God appear in it. It meets the more, our situations; engagements; and capacities. More would only have perplexed us, or multiplied our divisions.

— And let us remember also, that we do not want the aid of traditional supplement, or human additions to the Scriptures of truth. Though short, they are sufficient. They leave nothing obscure as to our duty, or welfare—They are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

— And may we not suppose that it will be a part of our engagement and blessedness in heaven, to

derive from those acquainted with them, or from the Saviour himself, the knowledge of a thousand things concerning his eventful history, of which we are now ignorant?

— Above all, let us rejoice in what has been furnished. Let us rejoice that it is so divinely proved—and that it has been preserved uncorrupted down to our own time—and that we have it in our own language—and are allowed, and—able, to read it. And let us keep the *end* of the whole in view, and never be satisfied till it be accomplished in our experience. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."

OCT. 17.—"*It is high time to awake out of sleep.*" Rom. xiii. 11.

THESE words regard Christians themselves. This is undeniable, from the motive subjoined—"For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Are *believers*, then, asleep? Not in the sense they once were—this would be impossible. But there are found, even in *them*, some remains of their former depravity. Though the good work is begun in them, it is far from being accomplished. While the bridegroom tarried, even the wise virgins slumbered and slept. Yes, Christians, alas! are often in a drowsy state; and oftener in a drowsy frame. This is sadly reproachful. What! drowsy, in examining themselves whether they be in the faith? Drowsy, in praising the God of their salvation? Drowsy, in seeking mercy and grace, to help

them in time of need? Drowsy, in serving their generation, by the will of God? Are they not the disciples of Jesus? Did he ever speak an idle word? Did he ever lose a useful moment? "I must work," said he, "the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work."

Yet, if the address be proper for Christians, how much more necessary is it for those who are entirely regardless of the things that belong to their peace! Surely, for *them* "it is high time to awake out of sleep"—

—If we consider how long they have been sleeping. We ought to lament that we have lost *any* of our precious hours and opportunities. However short it may have been, the time past of our life should more than suffice, wherein we have lived to the will of man. What, then, should those feel who have sacrificed the whole of their youth? Perhaps the vigour of mature age? What should those feel, who, perhaps, have grown grey in the service of sin and the world? The later we begin, the more zealous should we be to redeem the advantages we have lost; and to overtake those who were wise enough to set off early. When Cæsar, in Spain, met with a statue of Alexander, he wept at the thought, that this illustrious conqueror had achieved so much before *he* had even begun. High time,

—If we consider, that the day is arrived, and the sun is risen so high. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." We can say more than the Apostle. The night *is* spent. The day is *fully come*. And we are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness—*Therefore* let us not sleep as do others. They that sleep, sleep in the night. Look into Nature. The sun ariseth—and man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. The sun shines, not for us to sleep

by its lustre, but discharge the duties of our stations. And why is the Gospel given us? Why is our duty so plainly made known, but that we may follow it? And why are the blessings of Divine grace so clearly set before us, but that we may seek them? Our obligations always increase with our advantages. To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. And the servant that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes—for where much is given, much will be required. High time,

— If we consider the business they have to do. I am doing, said Nehemiah to some who would have interrupted him—I cannot come down to you: I am doing a great work. How much more may a Christian say this! He has an enterprize connected with the soul, and God, and eternity. Some things are desirable, and some are useful; but this is absolutely indispensable—

> "Sufficient in itself alone;
> "And needful, were the world our own."

Neglect, in many a concern, is injurious: but here it is ruinous—of every thing—and for ever. High time,

— If we consider the nature of the season in which this difficult and all-important work is to be accomplished. It is short: and there is but a step between us and death. It is uncertain in its continuance; and may be terminated every moment, by some of those numberless dangers, internal and external, to which we are exposed. And, once gone, it can never be renewed. No place will be found for repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears. High time,

— If we consider the danger they are in. If a man was sleeping in a house, and the fire was seen, not only to be kindled, but raging over his apartment; or approaching rapidly his door; or ready to catch

the very curtains of his bed; who would not think it high time for him to awake, and escape for his life? This is but a weak representation of the danger of sinners. They are condemned already. The wrath of God abideth on them. They are nigh unto cursing. Their end is to be burned. Their destruction is not only insured, but begun. And we are required to save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. High time to awake out of sleep,

— If we consider, that all besides are awake. God is awake—Angels are awake—Glorified saints are awake—Brutes are awake—The children of this generation are awake—Devils are awake—Death is awake—Damnation is awake—Their damnation slumbereth not.—It is high time to awake out of sleep!

— Is it not too late? Have I not reason to fear, that I have passed the bounds of Divine patience? that the Lord hath shut-to the door? that, in resentment of my neglects and provocations, he hath given me over to a reprobate mind? that he hath poured upon me the spirit of slumber?—And hence it is that I hear so often with indifference, and that nothing affects me now as it once did.

— But may I not hope, that his long-suffering will yet be my salvation? that he has spared me so long to afford space for repentance? that the seriousness of this retirement is another call of mercy? that the uneasiness, the dread, the desire, I now feel, are a token for good?—that the lingering of pity still cries, How shall I give thee up?—Lord, save—I perish!

Oct. 18.—"*He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.*" Psalm lxxxv. 8.

How encouraging is this *expectation!*—"He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints."

Mark the blessing itself—*Peace.* It does not mean outward ease and prosperity. He nowhere engages to speak this: but spiritual comfort; the composure of the conscience; the satisfaction of the heart: by which the "*soul* shall dwell at ease"—the effect of confidence in God: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." How relieving is it, under a sense of guilt, to believe in the blood that cleanseth from all sin! How soothing is it, in the various changes of life, to be assured that all things shall work together for our good! How confirming is it, in the prospect of every duty, to know that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness! This is the rest wherewith we are to cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

Observe the author of the communication—*He* will speak peace. And unless *He* speaks it, it will be spoken in vain. Friends may address us—but they will be found miserable comforters. Ministers may attempt to bind up the broken heart—but they will prove physicians of no value. Ordinances may be regarded—but they will be wells without water, and clouds without rain. But "when He giveth quietness, then who can make trouble?"—We can only implore, or announce peace: but His word produces, conveys it. He commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Nothing is beyond the reach of Him who turneth the shadow of death into the morning.

Observe the heirs of the privilege—He will speak peace to his *people,* and to his *saints.* These are not different characters, but different representations of the same persons: and the one is explanatory of the other. He has a people for his name: and if we ask, who they are, we are told they are saints; that is, they are holy ones. They are not perfectly holy: but they are really so. The principles of sancti-

fication, of which they are the partakers, will soon gain the entire possession of them; but even now they have the ascendancy in them. Their love of holiness is evinced, even with regard to their remaining corruptions. These are their burden and distress: and for these, they abhor themselves. They long, above all things, to walk so as to please God; and constantly pray, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.—And what have others to do with peace? "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Mark also the certainty of the assurance—He *will* speak peace unto his people, and to his saints. Every thing tends to confirm it. His Name—He is the God of peace. His thoughts—they are thoughts of peace. The mediation of the Son of his love—He made peace by the blood of his Cross. His dealings with us—Had he a mind to kill us, he would not have shewn us such things as these. The truth of his Word—The Scripture cannot be broken.

— But when will He do this? He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints—partially through life—specially in affliction—pre-eminently in death—and completely in heaven.

And how reasonable is the *caution*—"But let them not turn again unto folly."

— Here we see the character of sin: it is folly. Such the God of truth pronounces it to be now. Such, every transgressor will acknowledge it to be at last. Should not this be enough to deter us from it—that it perfectly befools us? and will fill us with everlasting shame and contempt?

— Here we are reminded that the people of God, though saints now, were once chargeable with it—The command not to *turn again* to folly proves this. Their being *made to differ*, supposes former sameness. They were by nature children of wrath, even as others: and they are willing to own it: and

often look to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged.

— We are also taught that they are still in danger; and need warning. A haughty spirit goes before a fall: and therefore they who are offended with admonition, or deem themselves above it, shew how much *they* stand in need of it. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. We are always exposed to a subtle and invisible enemy: we live in a wicked world; and carry within us an evil heart. The best, in an hour of temptation, have turned again to folly.

— But against this we should feel ourselves peculiarly concerned to guard, *when* God has appeared for us, and spoken peace to our souls. We should be alike ungrateful and infatuated were we not—ungrateful; for the more He does for us, the more anxious should we be, lest we offend and grieve his Holy Spirit—infatuated; for having known the evil of sin, and the bitterness of repentance, and the joy of God's salvation; shall we again cause him to hide his face from us? and wrong our own souls? For the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways—He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints—BUT LET THEM NOT TURN AGAIN TO FOLLY.

OCT. 19.—"*Seeing many things, but thou observest not.*" Isaiah xlii. 20.

THIS charge is as applicable to us, as it was to the Jews. Nothing is more common than the want of wise and proper *observation*. The objects and events adapted to excite it, and which would also reward it, are various and numberless. And some of them

daily and hourly strike our senses; yet they engage none of our notice and attention, as rational and moral beings. From an immense multitude, let us select two of these occurrences, by way of example—The birth, and the death, of our fellow-creatures.

How little attention is excited by the birth of a child. It may perhaps, if it takes place in respectable life, be announced in the paper—inquiries may be made concerning its sex and form—it may be viewed and embraced by the friends who call ceremoniously on the mother who has been delivered. But what moral or religious reflection is ever indulged by those who are informed of the event? or even by the parents themselves? The interesting sufferer herself may be pleased with the congratulations paid her; and forget her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world; and feel a lively gratitude for the mercy she has experienced: but no one thought may arise in the mind respecting the all-important result, in the production of a new being—and such a being, too!—Yet the birth of a child can scarcely be deemed less than a miracle of Nature and Providence. That child is a piece of Divine workmanship, fearfully and wonderfully made; and as fearfully and wonderfully preserved and endowed. When the Creator made it, he did a far greater thing than when he made the sun. The sun is a mass of unintelligent matter. It sees not its own light. It feels not its own heat; and is not destined to shine and burn for ever—But there is a spirit in that child; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. He is a moral being. He is the subject of reason and conscience. These principles are not yet developed; but they are lodged in him. They are in him, as the flower is in the seed; and the oak in the acorn. He is an heir of immortality; and though his existence began yesterday, it will never, never end. He will hear the heavens pass away with

a great noise, and see the elements melt with fervent heat. He will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; and go away into everlasting punishment, or into life eternal.

He is also to be viewed relatively, as well as personally. And what an awful interest does he acquire from the evil he may occasion, as well as suffer! and from the good he may produce, as well as experience! He may prove a viper in the bosom that feeds him; a disgrace to his family; a curse to the nation. Many may be vitiated by his example, and led into hell by his influence. One sinner destroyeth much good. Or he may make a glad father: and prove a blessing to the neighbourhood; and serve his generation by the will of God; and levy a tax of gratitude on future ages. Who that had seen Isaac Watts in the arms of his mother, sitting at the door of the prison in which his father was suffering for conscience' sake, could have divined that this precious babe was the sweet Psalmist of the Christian Israel; and that the little hand that stroked her cheek, was ordained to hold the pen that should instruct and edify the world to the end of time! Had we heard when the babe wept, and looked into the ark of bulrushes, we should have seen the scholar, learned in all the wisdom of Egypt; the scourge of Pharaoh; the deliverer of the Hebrews; the king in Jeshurun; the lawgiver and the prophet of the Lord, with whom he spake face to face. What says the Lord of all? "Despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my heavenly Father."

Let us pass to the second article—Death. This is perpetually taking place around us: yet how little it is noticed, was long ago remarked by Eliphaz: "They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it." This indifference is one of the most astonishing things in a world of wonders; especially when taken in

connexion with those consequences, that, in general belief, are supposed to result from it. If a tower fell; if a mountain was swallowed up by an earthquake; we should notice, and make it the subject of conversation for days and weeks—Yet, what is this, compared with the removal of a fellow-creature; detached from all union with visible nature: excluded from every thing that once pleased or engaged him below the sun; severed from all his endeared connexions; his flesh seeing corruption; while his soul has entered into an entirely new state of existence, in immediate and perceptible communion with the Lord of all! Death is the most serious and momentous event that can befall the children of men. For it is not the extinction of being, but only the termination of one mode of it, and the commencement of another: the transition from time, to eternity: from a course of action, to the sentence of retribution. When the dust returns to the dust, whence it was, the spirit returns to God, who gave it: and then the Divine fiat runs, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

And yet who considers it? When the bell tolls, we hardly ask whose doom it announces. When we see a funeral in the street, we scarcely look towards it, unless it be accompanied with the pomp of mortality. We see new names on the doors of the houses; but we pass, without thinking that the places which once knew the owners, know them no more for ever. A neighbour dies, and, from civility, we attend the burial, and lend him our last assistance; but return into the busy or trifling concerns of life as careless as before. Death enters our own dwelling; we feel deeply; but we reflect slightly. We mourn our loss, but the heart is not made better: we miss them for a time; but we soon furnish substitutes, or grow insensible to the want of them. When every duty the

tmost decorum can exact, or the most perfect affection ictates, is discharged towards the deceased; where the concern of the living to derive from the decease self, the spiritual profit which it is designed to yield? Where is the earnestness of the prayer, "*So* teach us to number our days, that we may apply our heart nto wisdom?"

Every death; the death of the young, and the eath of the old; the death of the rich, and the death f the poor; the death of the saint, and the death f the sinner; has something, not only serious, but ppropriate, to impart. But to the generality of man- ind, each of them says nothing—or speaks in vain.

Much of this disregard is from the frequency of he occurrence. Nothing seems to affect us strongly, ut what is sudden or rare. The most important bject, and the most interesting events, when they ecome familiar, awaken neither wonder nor atten- ion. Yet, if we cannot regulate our impressions, e can govern our ideas; we can apply our thoughts o any subject we please: and we should not suffer hat is so full of instruction, to pass without just eflection. We cannot be always thinking of death; ut we should never be so absent from a proper con- ition of mind, as not to be easily recalled to the nprovement of an event which must soon happen o all; and for which we may prepare, though we annot prevent.

It is not only the commonness of the subject, ut our aversion to it, that keeps us from attending o it. It is, above all things, irksome to flesh and lood: we, therefore, are always endeavouring to ut the evil day far away. But since we cannot put t off; let us pray for that *grace* which will turn the nemy into a friend, and the curse into a blessing. hen, to die will be gain: and we may live rejoicing n hope of the glory of God.

"If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, hink on these things."

Oct. 20.—"*Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.*" Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

—Yet what was the sight of Hezekiah, released from his affliction, and appearing cheerfully in his royal robes to his subjects, after the destruction of the Assyrian army; compared with another sight! "We see Jesus, who, for the suffering of death, was crowned with glory and honour." Some, in the days of his flesh, with their bodily eyes, beheld his glory. And perhaps we are ready to envy them the privilege. But this sight of him was not accompanied with salvation—"Ye also," said he, "have seen me, and believed not:" and to those who were then before him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

On the other hand, there is a substitute for this sight of him; and it is infinitely more available—And he is the subject of it, who sees him, not with the eye of the body, but with the eye of the mind; not with the eye of sense, but with the eye of faith—"He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life." There is a spiritual perception of him, as much distinguished from common knowledge, as the taste of a thing is, from the report of it. Thus the Apostle says, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me;" and, speaking of all Christians, as well as of himself, he adds, "He hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This sight of the Saviour will be evinced by certain effects. Self will be lowered. What can he think of his own excellencies who has been at the Court above, and seen the King in his beauty! Self-admiration and self-dependence will then be at an end. "The proud looks shall be humbled, and the lofty looks shall be laid low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." *So it* was with Job—"Now mine eye seeth thee;

wherefore I abhor myself, repenting in dust and ashes." So it was with Isaiah—"Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."—The world will fade away, and lose its charms. The Sun of Righteousness will shine it out; as the luminaries of the night disappear in the effulgence of day.—Attachment will result from it. Love enters by the eye. And faith is the same to the soul, as this sense is to the body: therefore, to them "that believe, he is precious." He "dwells in the heart by faith."—There will also necessarily arise, a desire after more acquaintance and intercourse with him. Thus Paul, not because he was ignorant of him, but because he knew him, said, "That I may know him."—There will also be an earnest desire to recommend him to others. As soon as Andrew knew him, he found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus. So did Philip, his friend Nathanael. And so did the woman of Samaria, her fellow-citizens.

This sight of him is a very distinguished privilege. As it is said of his immediate followers, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" so we, believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. There is enough in him, perceptible to the view of faith, to induce us to rejoice in the Lord *always*.—But how delightful is the sight of him in the hour of *conviction!* A drowning man, seeing a deliverer in a boat, hastening to his assistance: a debtor, on his way to prison, seeing a surety at hand, to undertake for him: a man, dying of hunger, seeing the most delicious food—never saw what I saw, when, sensible of my state and danger, and feeling myself ready to perish, my heart revived at the view of such a Saviour—in his suitableness to my condition—in his all-sufficiency for my relief—and I was enabled to hope in his mercy.

— How delightful is the sight of him in the hour of *desertion!* If he withdraws from me, it is not to shew his sovereignty, but to correct for sin: and when he hides his face, I am troubled. Then creatures are all miserable comforters. Then I sigh, O that it was with me as in months past! Then I pray, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation— But when he appears, and smiles again, it is more than the joy of morning, after a darksome night; or of spring, after the dreariness of winter.

— How delightful is the sight of him in the hour of *trouble!* It is then, when our purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts; when enemies oppose; when friends fail or betray; when health declines—It is then we look towards him, who is the consolation of Israel, and say, "This same shall comfort us:" "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian cometh into the land."

— How delightful is the sight of him in the hour of *death!* It loosened Simon from all below, and made him more than willing to depart; wishing, now he had seen him, to defile—to vex his eyes with nothing else. And how many have since said,

"Jesus, the vision of thy face
"Hath overpowering charms:
"Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
"If Christ be in my arms.

"Then, while ye hear my heartstrings break,
"How sweet my minutes roll!
"A mortal paleness on my cheek,
"And glory in my soul!"

Such are the influence and the blessedness of a sight of him, by faith, here. But what is heaven? "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face." "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory." But how superior will that sight be, to all our present apprehensions of him! It will be clear,

; will be ceaseless. It will be uninterrupted. It ill be perfect. It will be immediate. Whatever e have read or heard of him before, we shall then rclaim, with the Queen of Sheba, at the sight of olomon, "The half was not told me!"

"'Tis pleasant to believe thy grace,
"But we would rather *see;*
"We would be absent from the flesh,
"And present, Lord, with thee."

Oct. 21.—"*O that there were such an heart in hem, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, nd with their children for ever.*" Deut. v. 29.

Here we see the character of real religion. The eat of it, is the *heart*—The principle of it, is the *ear of God*—The expression of it, is *keeping* His *ommandments; all* of them; and *always.*

We have also the benefit resulting from it. The ood is personal—that it might be well with *them.* nd relative—and with their *children.* And durable —for *ever.*

But how lovely does God appear in the concern he ere expresses! "O that there were such an heart n them, that they would fear me, and keep all my ommandments always, that it might be well with hem, and with their children for ever!"—It is the anguage of complaint. It is as much as to say, "But do not find it so." Is He then disappointed? Not s to fact—for he knows all things. But he is, as to ight. Surely He may justly expect from us an attenion to his voice, and the improvement of the means nd advantages with which we are favoured. And when he meets with nothing of this, he has reason

to complain—And this is his meaning, when he says, "What more could have been done for my vineyard, and I have not done it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" "These three years I came seeking fruit, and finding none."

— It is the expression of desire. We are aware that when the Scripture ascribes human attributes and feelings to God, they must be understood according to the perfection of his nature. They cannot mean precisely the same in him, they do in us. Yet there is always a *truth* which is the basis of all such metaphorical representations. And a slavish adherence to systematic divinity, has much injured some of the finest passages of Revelation; and which were intended to be felt, rather than criticised. Let it not therefore be objected, that "our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth;" and asked, "Who hath resisted his will?"—This is his own language, "O that there was such a heart in them!" "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea!" "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wing, and ye would not!" Yes, these are his own words—the expressions of a God that cannot lie. This affords me every encouragement I want. Unworthy as I am, I see that he does not abandon me. He is willing to save me. He is waiting to be gracious. He is exalted to have mercy upon me. What is the inability of men to harmonize such declarations, with some other parts of their creed, to the oath of the living God—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: wherefore turn and live ye."

— It is the dictate of parental solicitude. It is the voice, not of a severe legislator or judge, but of a Father; a Father who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; a Father who

not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of
; a Father who says, of the refractory child,
ow shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall
eliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as
ah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart
rned within me, my repentings are kindled to-
er;" a Father who says of the relenting, self-
oaning child, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a
ant child? for since I spake against him, I do
estly remember him still: therefore my bowels
troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon
, saith the Lord." How often does he assume
relation, in order to deprive his greatness of
or; and to render it our encouragement and our
idence! And not only has he said, "Like as a
er pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them
fear him:" but he has taken for an image of his
lerness, the heart of a mother—and surely all that
rental indwells there: "As one whom his mother
forteth, so will I comfort you." "Can a woman
et her sucking child, that she should not have
passion on the son of her womb? She may."
ye mothers, your affection is ice, your heart is
, compared with His—"yet will I not forget
."
— Surely, "he that loveth not, knoweth not
—for God is love."—*Can* this encourage us to
Can we grieve *his* Holy Spirit? *Can* we hear
saying in *vain*, "O do not that abominable thing
h I hate"? "Or despisest thou the riches of
goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering;
knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee
epentance: but, after thy hardness and impeni-
heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against
day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous
gment of God?"

Oct 22.—"*I am come that they might have life.*" John x. 10.

Though men have differed in their definitions of life, they have all agreed in their estimation of it. Even the Father of Lies spake truth, when he said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life. Yet what is this life which we so highly prize? nourish with so much care? and to preserve which, we are ready to make every kind of sacrifice? What is it in duration? "A vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." What is it in dignity? "We spend our years as a tale that is told." What is it in enjoyment? Hear Jacob—"Few, and full of evils, have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." "But his was, perhaps, a peculiar case." What says Job? "*Man*, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble." "But he expressed himself under depression and gloom." What then says Solomon, who withheld his heart from no joy? "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." But here is a life that deserves the name; a life, spiritual in its nature; endless in its continuance; consisting, not of an immortality of being only, but of blessedness; commencing in grace; completed in glory; and emphatically called, The Life of God. Of this life, the Lord Jesus here speaks—"I am come that they might have life."

— He came to *procure it for us*. The blessing comes every way free to us—but it cost him dear. If we live, he must die. "The bread," said he, "which I give, is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." Princes have often sacrificed the lives of their subjects to their own: yea, and where their own have not been in danger, they have offered thousands of victims on the altar of their vanity or revenge—But the Prince of Peace gave his

life a ransom for many. He was poor. He was a man of sorrows. You see him agonizing in the Garden; and hear him exclaiming on the cross, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Why is all this? Is he guilty? "In him was no sin." Yet he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And so he was—but "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." "One died for all."

— He came to *announce it to us.* We can derive no benefit from him, without a dependence upon him; an application to him; a connexion with him. But all this requires the knowledge of him: and therefore says God, "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." It is true we are justified by faith—but "how can we believe in him, of whom we have not heard? and how can we hear, without a preacher?" He therefore "came and preached Peace." "I am come," said he, "a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." He proclaimed the nature of this life; the source of it; the medium of it; the certainty of it; the present enjoyment of it. His disciples, therefore, well said, To whom should we go, but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life. And these words he dispensed, not only by his personal ministry, but by the instrumentality of others. What the Apostles did, *he* did; because he sent them, and qualified them: he inspired them, and commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature, and also to record it, for the use of all future ages; so that we can read, what they delivered.

— He came to *produce it in us.* "The Son quickeneth whom he will." He received, in consequence of his death, the whole dispensation of the

Holy Ghost; and hence it is called, "The Spirit of Christ." And this Spirit is, as the Apostle calls it, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death. Nothing less than this can insure the result. It is above the efficiency of education; of example; of moral suasion; and of all the means of grace—without the grace of the means. The Gospel cannot accomplish it, if it comes in word only—It is the Spirit that giveth life. The servant of the Lord is like Gehazi. He went and laid the staff upon the child, but no life appeared till his master himself came. Who, then, is Paul? and who is Apollos? but ministers *by* whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? And they who were once dead in trespasses and sins, but are now walking in newness of life, will acknowledge that *he* quickened them; and will readily give him the glory that is due to his holy Name.

— In this blessed business, therefore, he is all in all—He came that we might have life—Came to procure it for us, as our Priest—To announce it, as our Prophet—To produce it, as our King. To obtain it, by his blood. To publish it, by his Gospel. To bestow it, by his Spirit. He is therefore called, as well he may, this life itself in the abstract—When he who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.

But how many neglect him, and compel him to complain, Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life! Hence the heinousness of their guilt, and the dreadfulness of their condemnation. Whatever difficulties attend this truth—in connexion with any other; they attach only to the explanation; not to the fact itself. Nothing can be clearer, from the Scripture, than that they who thus perish, will destroy themselves; and be treated as spiritual suicides.

But if we desire this life, can we suppose the Saviour will refuse us, when we go to him for—the very purpose—for which he came? Did he ever

refuse any? Can he refuse any? He cannot. He has bound himself—"HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT."

OCT. 23.—"*And that they might have it more abundantly.*" John x. 10.

THUS he not only informs us of the design of his advent: "I am come that they might have life;" but, like himself, adds the extensiveness of it—"and that they might have it more abundantly." This may be exemplified in three comparisons.

— We have life more abundantly than *Adam*. His life, before the Fall, was a noble life; but it is surpassed by the Christian's.—This is firmer as to its tenure. The life of innocency was precarious. It was suspended on the fallible will of man. The stock was in Adam's own hands; and he failed, and ruined all his posterity. But this life can never be destroyed. The Head of the New Covenant ever liveth; and because he lives, his people shall live also: I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.—It is richer as to its quality. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord, from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. It is not the primeval body of Adam which is to be the model in our resurrection, but the glorious body of the Saviour.—We are to bear the image of the heavenly. Had Adam remained innocent, though he would never have died, yet must he have experienced a change before he could have been capable of enjoying the blessedness which the poorest Christian expects: for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. After a

proper trial of his obedience, he would have been removed to a higher state; but even then he must have been a stranger to many interesting feelings and delightful enjoyments, arising from all the operations of Divine grace in our recovery from the depths of the Fall, to the glories of heaven. Eden was not equal to the Paradise above. The creation of man is excelled by his redemption. The righteousness of a perfect creature is far below the righteousness of God, in which we are not justified, but "exalted."

— We have life more abundantly than the *Jewish Church*. They derived their life from the same source with us; and it was essentially the same with ours. But we have it more plenteously as to knowledge, liberty, and enjoyment. We are fully justified in considering our spiritual advantages as very superior to their privileges, by our Saviour himself, who said to his disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." They had the types and shadows; we have the very image of the thing. They saw the Messiah afar off, and under a veil; he is with us, and we behold him with open face. They had the first-fruits; we have the whole vintage. They had the dawn; we have the full day—God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. They, from their comparative darkness, were inspired with more disquiet and terror; they received the spirit of bondage to fear: we receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The way into the holiest was not then made manifest: the people never entered where God dwelt between the Cherubim: the High Priest only went in; and he only once a year. But we have all boldness to enter into

the holiest by the blood of Jesus: and may draw near in full assurance of faith. They came to a material mountain, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness and darkness, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. "But we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

— We have life more abundantly than we had it *ourselves before*. Vital religion, though imperfect, is growing and progressive. Under the influences of the Holy Spirit, we go from strength to strength in our course; and are renewed day by day in our experience. There is life in an acorn; but the oak has it more abundantly. There is wheat in the blade; but how much more in the full corn in the ear! What a difference between Sir Isaac Newton when a babe on his mother's knee, and a philosopher measuring the distances of the planets! "Why a man can but live." Indeed! Do you not sometimes say, I am all languor; I have no life in me? At other times you are all vigour and alacrity—How you live then! What a difference between a man confined in a hospital; and a man at large, able to fill and enjoy his station. A man may be alive, and be blind, and deaf, and lame, and able to eat nothing with a relish. Some real Christians are little better than this—they are—this is all—just alive! But they are to be suspected who only are anxious to know that they have the reality of divine grace, while they are regardless of increase in the divine life. More is desirable. More is attainable. He came not

only that we might have life—but have it more *abundantly*.

Wherefore pray, "that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Oct. 24.—"*And I will give him the morning star.*" Rev. ii. 28.

If we found any difficulty in determining the subject of this promise, we could refer to the Speaker's own declaration, in another part of this Book—"I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and the morning star." Here we see the advantage of comparing one passage of Scripture with another. What is general in one, is particularized in another: and what is darker in one, is clearer in another.

Does he then promise *himself—I* will give him the morning star? Yes—He is the guide and the way: the teacher and the lesson: the priest and the sacrifice: the giver and the gift—He is all in all. By promising *himself*, he would teach us to look for happiness in himself, and not in the creature. He also knew that nothing else could satisfy the minds of his people, who would be sure to say,

"Without thy graces, and thyself,
"I were a wretch undone."

"Give what thou canst—without thee, we are poor:
"And, with thee, rich, take what thou wilt away."

And thus also he would encourage their expectations: for what will he withhold, if he gives himself? Therefore, because he could promise no greater, he promised himself. The bestowment of himself would have been greater than the bestowment of heaven: for heaven is, so to speak, but a part of him. He that buildeth the house hath more honour than the house.

But has he not already given himself to his people? And yet he speaks as if the donation was future—I *will* give him the morning star. Yes; as soon as they believed on him, they received him, and had the privilege of becoming the sons of God. But as to their knowledge, experience, and enjoyment; he communicates himself to them by degrees. The Apostle therefore says, after many years of communion with him, That I *may* win Christ, and be found in him; that I *may* know him.—The promise *must* be principally accomplished hereafter. We *could* not receive him in all his fulness now. Our place, our condition, our powers, forbid. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

— But let me survey the image—I will give him the *morning star*. The morning star, to our view, is the most beautiful and luminous. It is distinguished by its sparkling brightness. Many resemble Christ; but in all things he has the pre-eminence. Prophets, priests, and kings, have been anointed, as well as he; but he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. O how great is his beauty! He is fairer than the children of men; fairer than the children of God; fairer than the sons of God who shouted for joy at the creation—Yea, he is altogether lovely.

But the thing is, that this luminary is the harbinger of day. Therefore it is called the day star; and the morning star. The truth of the image, therefore, is to assure us—that to those who see Christ, and believe on him, there is a glorious season drawing on. The night of ignorance, and error, and sin, and sor-

row, with them is rapidly terminating—Weeping may endure for the night; but joy cometh in the morning. Look—look, Christians! *There* is the shining pledge. It never failed yet. It cannot deceive. Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. The NIGHT is far spent. The day is at hand. And then your sun shall no more go down.

Let this promise put me, and keep me in a proper frame of mind. Let it raise me above the world. Let it teach me, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. Let it induce me to rejoice evermore; yea, and in every thing to give thanks. To the upright there ariseth *light* in the darkness. If in the world I have tribulation, in him I have peace. Many things are denied me; but I can dispense with them, since he is mine. Why should I envy others? They succeed; they gain; they have—But *I* have the morning star.

"What others value, I resign;
"Lord, 'tis enough that *thou* art mine:
"I shall behold thy blissful face;
"And stand, complete, in righteousness!"

OCT. 25.—"*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*" John x. 9.

A door is a very familiar and striking representation of the Lord Jesus. It seems hardly necessary to remark, that it must be a metaphor. Yet the Papists, from taking literally, what is spoken in a similar instance, have introduced the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation. Because, when he took the bread and the wine, our Saviour said, "This *is* my body, and *this is* my blood; they believe that the disciples re-

ceived his very body and blood; and that every communicant does the same now, when the priest has consecrated the elements: and, say they, we only take him at his word—nothing can be plainer. Upon the same principle, we may say, he is timber and nails: for he says—what can be clearer?—I am the door. But can any man of common sense—can a child suppose, that he means any thing more than that a door is an image of him?

— And the design of the allusion is obvious. A door is the medium of passage—And Jesus stands between God and us. He is the mediator of the new covenant. God comes to us through him: and conveys all his blessings to us by him. And we approach God through him. I am the way, said he—No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. And as, with regard to our persons, we come unto God by him; so, with regard to our services, we offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And, with regard to both, we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him.

— But how is the person described, who derives benefit from him? He makes use of him for this purpose—"*By* me if any man *enter* in." This supposes a spiritual concern. Many are careless about their souls. They have never been convinced of sin: never induced, from an apprehension of their danger, to cry, What must I do to be saved? They are men of the world: and all their anxieties are confined within the narrow bound of time and sense. Others, if in a degree awakened, are not enlightened. Their concern is erroneously directed—for there is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but it ends in death. There is a refuge that cannot abide the storm. There is a hope that is like the spider's web—as curiously wrought, and as easily destroyed. The case is this. There is salvation in none other than in him, who was delivered for our offences, and

was raised again for our justification. In the Lord alone have we righteousness and strength. To him, therefore, must men come. And to him the Christian *does* come. He knows, not only that there is no salvation for him out of Christ, but that there is no salvation in him, without a dependence upon him, and an application to him. He knows that, as a medicine never taken, can never cure; and as food never eaten, can never nourish: so an unapplied Saviour is no Saviour to him. He therefore makes use of Christ for every end he is revealed to answer. He builds upon him, as a foundation. As a way, he walks in him. As a door, by him he enters in.

— And what are the advantages he obtains when admitted? *Safety*—"He shall be saved." Saved from the curse of the law, and the wrath to come—Saved from the roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour—Saved from the King of Terrors—Saved from a world lying in wickedness—Saved from an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God—Saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation.—*Liberty*—"He shall go in and out." A man is free in his own house. He goes in and out at his pleasure—and when he goes out, he is not shut out, like a stranger; and when he goes in, he is not shut in, like a criminal. This, too, is the privilege of sheep, under the care of a good shepherd. They go in; but if they could not go out, the fold would be a prison. They therefore, at night, go in for protection; and in the morning, go out for food. The expression, therefore, is used in the Scripture as significant of freedom: and the meaning is, that what is done for the Christian's safety, does not compromise his liberty. He knows the truth; and the truth makes him free: and he is free indeed —free, to go wherever he pleases in Immanuel's land—free, to partake of all the privileges of the sons of God.—*Plenty*—"And find pasture." Ah! *said one* of them, realizing this, "The Lord is my

shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." So Isaiah—"They shall feed in the ways"—the ways of his commandments, ordinances, and dispensations—"and their pasture shall be in all high places"—where they cannot be hid: but where they may seem unlikely to find supplies; as elevations, especially in warm countries, are commonly barren—but He feeds them, while he lifts them up, for ever. Religion raises them; but not into regions of barren speculation—for it is added, "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them."

OCT. 26.—"*O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.*" Jer. iv. 14.

THOUGH these words are addressed to Jerusalem; by a principle of the fairest reasoning, they extend to every individual who needs the same purification and deliverance. And who does not?—Yea, the circumstance strengthens the argument. Jerusalem was called the Holy City; the City of the living God. There stood his temple; there were his servants to make known his will; they had Moses and the Prophets. If *they* needed such an address; is it needless for us? With all their unbelief and ingratitude, disobedience, and perverseness, they were fair specimens of the human race. In Adam, all died; and from him we derive a mortal, and therefore a depraved nature—"What is *man*, that *he* should be clean; or he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" All, therefore, need pardoning mercy,

and sanctifying grace—All need to be saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But here are two difficulties.

First. God himself is represented as concerned for the success of the measure. "O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." This interjection, with us, often implies weakness and grief, as well as desire. We must therefore take care how we apply such expressions to God, lest we degrade the perfections of his nature. He speaks to us after the manner of men; but his condescension must not rob him of his glory. Yet his language is not devoid of truth. However metaphorical it may be, there is in it a reality that more than justifies it. To which we may add, that even grief and weakness had better be ascribed to God, than insincerity. Let us be assured of this, hat he means what he says. While he hates our sins, he loves our souls; and is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He is not only the righteous Governor, but the kind Father. This is the lovely character under which he delights to display himself. Hence his expostulation with himself—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hence the oath he has taken—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn and live ye." Hence the sacrifice of the Cross—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Hence all the means he is incessantly employing to awaken and engage our attention to the things that belong to our peace. Hence he has established the ministry of reconciliation, and sends forth his servants to beseech us, in his Name, to be reconciled unto God.

Secondly. The work is considered as of our own achieving; and *we* are called upon to cleanse our hearts from wickedness. It would be a contradiction of the whole Bible were we to be regarded as the authors. But we are the instruments. God not only worketh in us, but by us. And hence, though all is of grace, yet *we*—"will and do." *We* believe and repent, and hold on our way, and wax stronger and stronger. It would be an abuse of the language to infer from it, that we have power to do this naturally, or of ourselves—yet the address would be absurd, had we not the ability in some other way. God has the right to command, though we have lost the power to obey; but this is not the ground of the injunction. If in him our help was not found, he would not thus speak to us. But it is. His grace is sufficient for us. Every thing necessary for our deliverance from sin, is provided, and presented in the Gospel: and we must have recourse to it in the use of the means which he has ordained. The address, therefore, is not like a command to a man to flee—a thing unnatural; and which he cannot enable himself to do: but like a command to a man, who was ready to perish for want, to take and eat. Though he has nothing of his own, he has in view and at hand every kind of supply, and he is welcome to partake of it. Or, like a command to a sick man to be cured: he cannot indeed heal himself, but he has one near him who is able and willing to heal him; and asks, Wilt thou be made whole? And to this remedy he is to submit. All such commands are designed to make us sensible of our wants and weakness; and to bring us upon our knees. *Then* every thing is possible. Forgiveness and sanctification are attainable—are certain. And having this hope in us, we purify ourselves even as he is pure. Having these promises, we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

OCT. 27.—*"O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved."* Jer. iv. 14.

THE words remind us, that sin is of a defiling nature. It is therefore held forth by every kind of uncleanness; by wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; by leprosy and the plague; by mire and dirt; by the rottenness and corruption of the grave. It defiles every thing it touches. In consequence of it, the whole creation groaneth; and all our eyes behold, is doomed to perish, like the house of the leper, under the law, because of the infection of the inhabitant. "O do not," says God, "the abominable thing that I hate." "My soul loathed them." How great must that evil be, which can induce the Creator to loathe the work of his own hands! The Father of all, to loathe his very offspring! And even the God of love, the very Essence of mercy, to say to them at last, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" O my soul! does sin appear to thee, as it does to Him—exceeding sinful?

Secondly. That the purification we need, extends to the heart—"Wash thine heart from wickedness." The reason is, because this is the very seat of the pollution. Some, who know their lives are open to censure, will yet plead for the goodness of their hearts. But a good heart will always produce a good life, as naturally as a good tree yieldeth good fruit. Others contend that our corruption is not innate, but acquired; derived, not from within, but from without —Yet, says the faithful and true Witness, "From *within*, out of the *heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Hence,

"No outward forms can make us clean—
"The leprosy lies deep within."

And we must be pure in heart. How is this to be ascertained? By our deliverance from the *love* of sin. The love of sin defiles even more than the practice. But every man that is renewed in the spirit of his mind, not only avoids sin, but hates it. He feels it to be his burden and his grief. And, while any of the abomination continues adherent to him, he exclaims, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Thirdly. This purification is connected with salvation—"Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved."—It is *necessary* to salvation. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Indeed, in such a state, and with such a disposition, the enjoyment of heaven is as impossible, as the attainment. The exclusion, therefore, is not arbitrary, but unavoidable.—It will *certainly terminate* in salvation. This is not only fully implied in the declaration, but it is made the matter of express promise—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—It is a *part of salvation*. The man who has experienced it, is not only an heir, but a subject of the blessedness. He has, not indeed the perfection of the thing; but he has more than the title and the pledge—he has the beginning. Being made free from sin, and become the servant of God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

OCT. 28.—"*If any man love God, the same is known of him.*" 1 Cor. viii. 3.

THERE is nothing so mortifying to men as inattention and neglect. Many would rather be hated, than

neglected. The one implies, that they are deemed something: the other shews, that they are considered as beneath notice. The one rouses; the other annihilates. Hence we are anxious to be known of our fellow-creatures; especially those who are placed above us,—and can take us by the hand—and raise us up—and put us forward in life. Yet, as men of low degree are vanity; so men of high degree are a lie. After all our servile attentions and compliances, we are never sure of gaining their regard—And what could even their zeal do for us in our most important interests? O let us turn our anxiety another way. Let us sanctify it. Let us make it the medium of our happiness. Let us be concerned to please God. Then we shall be sure to succeed; and success will be every thing. For in His favour is life—"If any man love God, the same is known of him."

This knowledge being spoken of, as the highest privilege, it must intend much more than a mere acquaintance with the subjects of it: for thus, all are known of him.

The least thing intended, is *discernment*. The Lord knows their condition. Knows all their walking through this great wilderness. Knows all their trials. Knows the pressure of every burden they bear. Knows their frame; and remembers that they are dust. He perceives all their dangers. Their enemies may plot against them; but they do it in the sight of their Father and Friend. And, as to their persons, the Lord knoweth them that are his. He never overlooks them in the crowd. If there was only one of them in a village, or city, or nation, he would have his eye upon him. However misrepresented and reproached, he recognizes them as upright before him. However obscure their condition, he views them as the excellent of the earth. However little their faith, he watches the tears with which they cry, Lord, I believe; help thou mine

unbelief. However encompassed with infirmities, which sometimes perplex others, he, who knows what is the mind of the spirit, knoweth that they love him. *We* can only judge of motives by actions. But God judges of actions by motives. He seeth the heart; in consequence of which, in estimating the services of his people, he admits into the amount, not only all they do, but all they design to do, and wish to do, when they are hindered; and accepts them, according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. Even this is a source of satisfaction to the Christian.

— But this knowledge, also, takes in *approbation*. The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous—So he does the way of the ungodly. But the meaning is, he approves it; he commends it. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in them that hope in his mercy. He regards them, with complacency, as the work of his own hands. He esteems them as his jewels; his bride; his offspring. Their prayer is his delight: their alms, the odour of a sweet smell. Approbation must be valued according to the condition and character of the being from whom it comes. It would be a reproach to pass for the favourite of Satan. The first Christians would also have deemed the friendship of the world no recommendation: for they were satisfied to say, "The world knoweth us not; for it knew him not." A great personage reflects a lustre upon a near object: a person would be ambitious to be seen intimate with the king. And to live in the affections of the wise and good, says a fine writer, is like breathing in an eastern spice-grove. What a dignity is it, then, to walk with God! What a blessedness to hear *Him* say, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee"! And what shall be done for the man whom the King of kings delighteth to honour?

— For this knowledge is *acknowledgment*. The Apostle, admonishing the Thessalonians, says, "Know

them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord"—that is, own them with respect; and verbally and practically treat them as their office requires. Thus God claims his people. He owns them in the dispensations of his providence, and in the agency of his grace. He signalizes them in life. He does it often more peculiarly in death: so that his saints are joyful in glory, and shout aloud upon their beds; and induce their very enemies to exclaim, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! But, above all, they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day, when I make up my jewels. He will confess them before the assembled earth and heavens; and place them nearer the Throne than angels.

Of what importance, then, is the love of God! And how carefully should we enquire, whether it be shed abroad in our hearts! If *any* man love him, the same is known of him—But *no* other. Nothing can be a substitute for this affection. Without it, our knowledge, our gifts, our faith itself, are vain. If we have any thing like devotion, it is formality. If we have peace, it is delusion. If we have safety, it is a refuge of lies. And though we may go to the very door of heaven, and knock, and say, Lord, Lord, open unto us—he will profess, "I never knew you—Depart."

"Let me love Thee more and more—
"If I love at all, I pray:
"If I have not lov'd before,
"Help me to begin to-day."

OCT. 29.—"*In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee.*" Psalm lxxxvi. 7.

THIS was the language of David. David was a king, and a saint. He was pre-eminently great and good—

Yet neither does his rank or his godliness exempt him from trouble. But it is well to see what such a man does when trouble cometh upon him. And here we have his resolution: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee."

This was the wisest thing he could do; and it is the best thing we can do. For, first. Prayer is enjoined upon us in trouble. The will of God is our rule—And who can be ignorant of his command? Who has not read, "Is any afflicted? Let him pray."

Secondly. Prayer is the design of trouble. He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men. He has an end, worthy his wisdom and his goodness, to answer by every trial. It is to bring us to himself—and to bring us nearer to himself. It is to quicken us to pray more frequently, more earnestly —"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face—In their affliction they will seek me early."

Thirdly. Prayer is the evidence that trouble is sanctified. It is a great thing not to lose a trial. It is never neutral in its effect. It always injures, or improves. It is worse than nothing when it sends us to the creature, either in a way of accusation or relief. But when we turn to Him that smiteth us; and acknowledge that his judgments are right; and cast ourselves at his feet, resolved, if we perish, *there* to die—we need not say, with Job, "I am afraid of all my sorrows;" but confess, with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Fourthly. Prayer is the solace of trouble. There is some relief in tears, and therefore Nature is provided with them. It eases and soothes the bursting heart, to pour our grief into the ear of a friend; who having rejoiced when we rejoiced, will weep when we weep. But oh! how good is it to draw near to God! How delightful is it, like Job, to pour out our tears unto him: and resemble the child that

sobs himself asleep in his mother's arms, and on his mother's breast! "A glorious high throne from the beginning," says the Church, "has been the place of our sanctuary." A temple that no evil enters; an asylum that no enemy invades—There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest.

Fifthly. Prayer is the medium of our deliverance from trouble. For this release, we are allowed to be concerned. But we must seek it from God. And in doing this, we have not only his power to encourage us—and nothing is too hard for him: He can turn the shadow of death into the morning—but his goodness and love; and like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Yea, more: we have his faithfulness and truth; that we shall not seek him in vain. He has engaged to appear to our joy; not indeed in our time and way, but in his own. He has bound himself; and put the bond into our hand: and we can produce it; and plead it; and be surer of the fulfilment, than we are of the continuance of heaven and earth—For heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass. And here it is—"Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him."

Oct. 30.—"*Messiah the Prince.*" Dan. ix. 25.

This is not the only character of the Messiah. But we must connect it with every representation we

ave of him; that his glory may not be injured
y his condescension; nor his authority diminished
y his kindness. Is he exalted at the right hand of
od? It is, to be "a Prince," as well as "a Saviour."
he a Priest? He is "a Priest upon his throne."

How is this Prince designated?

He is "the Prince of the *kings of the earth.*"
hey often think little of him; and, imagining them-
lves their own, say, Who is lord over us? But
herein they deal proudly, he is above them. They
e all raised by his power; they are all controulable by
is will; they are all subservient to his designs; they
e all amenable to his tribunal. Hence his avowal—
By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By
ie princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the
arth." Hence the admonition—"Be wise now there-
ore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
erve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
iss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from
ie way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.
lessed are all they that put their trust in him."

He is "the Prince of *Peace.*" He came to medi-
te between heaven and earth: and we are reconciled
nto God by the death of his Son. Men talk of
aking their peace with God. If our tears, or works,
r alms, could have availed for this purpose, the world
ould never have witnessed the sufferings of Christ.
ut *he* made peace by the blood of his Cross. One
ied for all—And he was more than all. The value of
is sacrifice was infinite: and every end that could
ave been answered by the destruction of a world
f sinners, has been equally and better answered
y the death of the Saviour.—Nothing will effectually
atisfy an awakened conscience, but what satisfied
he justice of God. Yet, surely *this* will suffice!
When, therefore, it is apprehended and applied by
aith, we enter into rest; and feel a peace within
hich passeth all understanding. By his grace,
oo, he reconciles us to our duty, and to our con-

dition. He frees us from those anxieties and fears which an idolatrous regard to creatures excites; and enables us to be careful for nothing, by casting all our care upon him, who careth for us. Also, by subduing our pride and selfishness, by which alone come contentions; and inspiring us with love, the bond of perfectness; we live in harmony with our fellow-creatures. Yea, we are in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field are at peace with us.

He is "the Prince of *Life*." Other princes, however powerful, are mortal: and this is a reason why we should not put our trust in them—Their breath goeth forth, they return to their dust; in that very day their thoughts perish. But Jesus liveth for ever: and because he lives, his people live also. Other princes, while they are living themselves, cannot impart life to others—though, alas! they often take it away; and sacrifice thousands of their subjects to their own lusts. But Jesus had not only life in himself, but came that we might have life; and have it more abundantly. He procured, and he communicates, and sustains a life superior to that of Adam in Paradise, and of angels in glory. This is the promise that God hath promised us, even *eternal* life. And *this* life is *in* his Son. He therefore that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life.

He has other designations; and all come short of his praise. But these are sufficient to shew how safe and how happy all they are who have become his subjects. It was a fine compliment that Hiram paid Solomon, when he said, "Surely because the Lord loved Israel, therefore made he thee king over them." How much more has God shewn his goodness to his people, in setting this King upon his holy hill of Zion! Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them make their boast in the Lord; and in his righteousness be exalted.

Let them also be concerned to approve themselves wise, and good, and loyal subjects, to the best of Princes: so that, instead of disgracing him, they may be to him for a name and a praise among all those who shall hear of so great a people.

But woe to those who reject his sceptre. As for these mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth and slay them before me.

OCT. 31.—"*Prayer shall be made for him continually.*" Psalm lxxii. 15.

WE are not only to pray; but to pray without ceasing. We are not only to pray for ourselves; but for others. We are to pray for kings, and all that are in authority—for ministers—for all saints—for even our enemies, who despitefully use us and persecute us—and, what may seem strange—we are to pray for Jesus Christ. "Prayer also shall be made for him continually."

Is prayer then necessary for *him?* Is he not above the reach of danger, pain, and want? Yes. He who once had not where to lay his head, has all power in heaven and in earth; he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. The meaning, therefore, cannot be, that prayer should be continually made for him personally; but relatively. Owing to the interest he has in certain objects; what is done for them, is done for himself; and so he esteems it. We therefore pray for him, when they pray for his ministers; his ordinances; his Gospel; his Church—in a word, his CAUSE. David, therefore, exemplifying what he had foretold, immediately breaks forth and says—"And blessed be his glorious Name for

ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

But *what* should we pray for on his behalf? Our prayers should vary with the state of his cause: but we should always bear four things upon our minds. First. The degree of its resources; that there be always a sufficiency of suitable and able instruments to carry on the work—To this the Saviour himself directs us: "The harvest truly is great; but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."—Secondly. The freedom of its administration; that whatever opposes or hinders its progress may be removed. "Pray for us," says the Apostle, "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."—Thirdly. The diffusion of its principles; that they may become general and universal; spreading through every family, neighbourhood, and province, and realm. So prayed of old even the pious Jew: "That thy way may be known on earth; thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee."—Fourthly. The increase of its glory, as well as its extent; that it may abound more in wisdom, purity, spirituality, charity, and zeal: that the light of the moon may be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun be sevenfold as the light of seven days: that for brass, he would bring gold; and for iron, silver; and for wood, brass; and for stones, iron. Thus, they that make mention of the Lord are to "give him no rest"—not only until he "establish"—but "make Jerusalem *a praise* in the whole earth."

But *why* should we be concerned to pray for Him?—Consistency requires it. We are the professors of Christ. We profess to be his servants—but can we be wise and good servants, if we are neglectful of our Master's affairs? We profess to be *his* subjects—but can we be loyal subjects, if we are

indifferent to the glory of our Sovereign? We profess to be his friends—but can we be true and faithful friends, unless we make his interests our own; mourn over his dishonour, and rejoice in his prosperity?—Benevolence aequires it. The Gospel is the greatest of all blessings to the children of men. Wherever it enters, the wilderness and the solitary place is made glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. It is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth; and where it does not save the soul, it yields a thousand advantages to the community. Who would not wish *him* success? *His* career is the march of truth, and righteousness, and peace. *He* makes the widow's heart to sing for joy. In *him* the fatherless findeth mercy.

> "Blessings abound where'er *He* reigns;
> "The pris'ner leaps to lose his chains:
> "The weary find eternal rest;
> "And all the sons of want are blest."

— Gratitude requires it. How much do we owe him! When we consider what he has done, is doing, and will do, for us; all we are, and all we have, appear to be his, by a thousand claims: and nothing can equal our vileness, if we are not led hourly to ask, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

But what reason have we to conclude that these prayers for him will be *heard?* Much every way. The prayers, indeed, even of good men, are not always answered. Sometimes they know not what they ask. And when they implore what would prove evil, God's wisdom and kindness lead him to refuse. But whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us. And has he not commanded us to pray, that his kingdom may come? Has he not promised it? Is not the grand condition fulfilled—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure

of the Lord shall prosper in his hands?" Can his death be unavailable? Can the engagements of the everlasting covenant be made void? We *cannot* pray for him in vain.

— But what is necessary to evince that our praying for him is *sincere?* For there is much prayer that is a mere mockery of God. Out of their own mouths many will be condemned hereafter: and they would feel themselves condemned already, were it not that the heart is deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked. A man prays to redeem his time, and to have his conversation in heaven; and goes and sits in the play-house for the answer. A father prays for the salvation of his child; and does all in his power to leave him affluent; and surrounded with temptations that render his conversion a miracle. A third prays to be damned; for he prays, Forgive us our trespasses, *as* we forgive them that trespass against us: and he is implacable.—When a man sincerely desires a thing, and in proportion as he desires it, he will seek after it; and use all the means placed within his reach to obtain it. When, therefore, a person professes a great concern for a thing, and neglects whatever is necessary to it, we make no scruple to tax him with folly or falsehood. Let us do, in religious matters, what we do in other cases—Let us judge of our faith, by our practice; and of our hearts, by our lives.

What then, you say, must we do to prove that our prayers in the cause of Christianity are sincere? Do! Some of you should come forward and offer to go forth as missionaries. What hinders? Nothing in your condition: nothing in your connexions. Nothing but the love of ease; and the fear of suffering; and the want of the *spirit* of the prayer—Arise, O Lord, and plead thine own cause.—Do! Live for him. All cannot go abroad. But all have a sphere in which they may be useful. They may hold forth the word of life, by their temper and conversation.—Do!

Employ all your influence with others; provoking them to love and to good works.—Do! Give according to your opportunity and ability—exercising self-denial, to enlarge your ability. Read the whole verse of our text—"And he shall live; and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised."

NOVEMBER 1.—"*How readest thou?*" Luke x. 26.

IT is well to be able to read. Thousands are not; and so cannot thus agreeably fill up their leisure moments; nor improve their minds by the written communications of others. But whatever a thing be in itself; the *use* we are to make of it, is to determine, whether it be to us, good or evil; a blessing or a curse.

Some will lament for ever, that they were taught to read. They never improved so great a talent. Yea, they perverted and abused it. They read books which undermined their principles, defiled their imaginations, and demoralized their lives. But others are thankful for such an attainment. It has afforded them not only gratification, and profit; but spiritual improvement, and consolation. One, in reading, has been converted from the error of his ways. Another, has been guided in his experimental and practical doubts and difficulties. A third, has been revived while walking in the midst of trouble—

— And if this has been the case while reading other books, how much more while reading the Scriptures of truth. This volume you are bound, above all other books, to read. It is your duty. It is your privilege—But how readest thou? How *ought* you to read it?

First. You ought to read it as the dictates of Inspiration. You do not, perhaps, deny, or question this; but you ought actually and frequently to impress the mind with it; that when you open these pages, you may say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." The Apostle admonishes the Hebrews not to turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. He does not say, who *spake*—but, who *speaketh*. The address is to be considered as immediate. It is so to us, as well as to those who originally heard it. Had it been just written, it could have had no more authority, and have been no more deserving of attention, than now. How much depends upon this advice! For as we receive the Word, so shall we be affected by it. If we regard it as false, it will produce no result. If as human, it will influence as human. But if divine, it will operate divinely. Hence, says the Apostle, to the Thessalonians: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Secondly. Let him that readeth, understand. The Eunuch, returning from Jerusalem in his chariot, was reading; and reading even the Prophecies of Isaiah; but Philip said to him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" To know the meaning of the Scriptures, it is a good thing to read on, till we come to the end of a paragraph or subject, regardless of the divisions in chapters and verses. These breaks are useful, and they are generally made in their proper places; but not always: in consequence of which, the sense is injured or darkened, by the writer's closing before he has finished; or commencing something in the middle of the argument.—Neither should we lay too much stress on a particular word or phrase; but be guided by the natural current of the passage;

and endeavour always to apprehend what is the *present* design of the Sacred Writer. Here good common sense will often do more than the learned affectations of expositors, who frequently elude the solution of a difficult text; and throw doubts into a clear one. While we ought to avail ourselves of every assistance from the labours of others; and, above all, to exercise our own minds; we must be humble in our inquiries, and feel and acknowledge our need of Divine guidance, to lead us into all truth. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." So prayed David—and so must we—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Thus the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err: and without this, the scholar and the genius will for ever go astray. The great impediment to divine knowledge is *the state of the heart:* and as soon as we are made deeply sensible of our need of what the Gospel is designed to afford; and willing to be saved in the Lord's own way; and to walk so as to please him: every thing opens easily and delightfully; and the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. But this can only be obtained from "the *Spirit* of truth."

Thirdly. We should read with a view to self-application. Instead of thinking of others—which is too frequently the case; we should think of ourselves; inquiring how it bears upon our own character and condition; and how, as Lord Bacon says, it comes home to our own businesses and bosoms. If I read a threatening—"O my soul, do I stand exposed to this danger?" If I read a promise—"May I claim this blessing?" If I read a reproof or a commendation—"Am I censured by the one? or encouraged by the other?" "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?"

Fourthly. We should read with a determination

to reduce what we read to experience and practice. The design of all the instruction contained in the Scripture is to bear upon the conscience and the life. The doctrine is not only according to grace, but according to godliness. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. This is the way to increase with all the increase of God. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. If a man do his will he shall know of his doctrine. We may apply to reading, what the apostle James has said of hearing: "But be ye doers of the word, and not readers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a *reader* of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful *reader*, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his *deed*."

Nov. 2.—"*His time in the flesh.*" 1 Peter iv. 2.

"FLESH" is not to be taken, here, morally; but physically. It is not here used to signify our corruption, but our present existence—as when Paul says, The life that I now live "in the flesh," I live by the faith of the Son of God. It intends, therefore, our life while *in the body*. For we shall not be *in* it always —a period is approaching when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Our "time" in the flesh varies in circumstances, with regard to individuals. But it has four general characters applicable to all the human race.

First. It is checquered. The young may look forward and view life in the fascinations of hope; and the aged may look back, and more congenially dwell on the gloomy, than on the cheerful: and the same man, in the hour of present impression, may feel himself too much elated, or too much depressed with his condition—but the truth is the same. It is neither a paradisaical, nor a wilderness scene. It is neither entirely dark, or light; but intermingled sunshine and shade. Who ever found life so smooth, as to have no roughness? And who ever had sickness, without ease? or sorrow, without comfort? And who is now authorized to say, To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant? Or, Mine eye shall no more see good?

Secondly. It is short. And short, not only as to eternity, and the ages of men before the Flood; but absolutely short. The general duration is threescore years and ten. But much of this is nothing as to the superior purposes of our being. We do not mean business: this may not only be rendered consistent with religion, but is made, by a Christian who abides with God in his calling, a part of it.—But there is the weakness of infancy, and the childhood of age. There are the deductions of *needful* sleep, and allowed recreation, and unavoidable intercourse. It is often also cut short. How few reach seventy! And those who do, commonly look in vain to find any of the associates of their youth or maturity. Every thing expressive of brevity is seized by the Sacred Writers to hold forth the brevity of our time in the flesh—a flower; a flood; a tale; a dream; a vapour; a ship before the wind; an eagle pouncing on his prey—There is but a step between us and death.

Thirdly. It is uncertain. How can it be otherwise, when we consider the diseases and accidents to which we are continually exposed? and the feebleness of our frame? and the number and delicacy

of the organs of which the body is composed? Sixty times every minute, as our pulse tells us, the question is asked, whether we shall live or die. The fool in the Gospel said, I have much goods laid up for many years; soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: but that very night his soul was required of him. Persons just ready to enter connected life, have been called from marriage rites to attend funeral solemnities. The owners have been just ready to take possession of a new mansion, but have been carried to their long home. And the traveller, starting for his journey, has gone the way of all the earth.

But fourthly. It is important. Yea, all-important, by reason of its relation to another, and an eternal state. It is not only an introduction to this state—but a preparation for it. It is influentially connected with it, as the sowing with the harvest. Our thoughts, words, and actions, are the seed; and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. The present is the only season of obtaining justification and renovation: a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. *Now* is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

The same will apply to our doing good, as well as to our gaining good. Our time in the flesh is the only season in which we can glorify God, and serve our generation! What a treasure then is life! And how concerned should we be to work while it is day, seeing the night cometh wherein no man can work! In this one article, the saints below are more privileged than the saints above: and we are persuaded, that those who have entered their rest would be willing, were it the pleasure of God, to come down and re-enter this vale of tears, to have the opportunities of usefulness we enjoy—who can be candid towards those who differ from us; forgive injuries; visit and relieve the afflicted; spread the Gospel; teach the ignorant; save souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins. "Whatsoever

hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for re is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor dom in the grave, whither thou goest."

Nov. 3.—"*As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.*" 2 Cor. vi. 10.

is is the duty; this is the privilege of the Christian. ıether he considers and feels himself in a state of le—or warfare—or perplexity—or penury—or vary- experience—or misapprehension from others; if ırrowful," he may, and he ought to be able to say— et always rejoicing."

Though dwelling with strangers around,
And foreign and weary the land,
I homeward to Zion am bound—
The day of release is at hand.
Then, Mesech and Kedar, farewell,
To enter my welcome abode;
With friends and with angels to dwell,
With Jesus, my Saviour and God!

Though hourly summon'd to arms,
And legions against me combine,
I'm calm in the midst of alarms;
My weapons and cause are divine.
A Captain almighty I own;
And banner'd by Faith in his Name,
I shout ere the battle is won—
I more than a conqueror *am!*

Perplexings though often I feel,
And mazy the paths that I tread,
My God has been leading me still,
And still he has promised to lead.
The crooked shall all be made straight,
The darkness shall beam into light;
I have but a moment to wait,
And faith shall be turned to sight.

If small my allotment below,
I will not at others repine;
Their joy is the gilding of woe,
Their wealth they must quickly resign.
Though poor, how much richer am I!
In want, I have all I desire;
My treasures, the soul can supply,
And last when the stars shall expire!

If, weeping and fearing, I pass
Through changes, in state and in frame;
Yet, constant in power and grace,
My Saviour is always the same.
No shadow of turning he knows,
Whose bliss is the fountain of mine;
And while his eternity flows,
My happiness cannot decline.

How little the multitude know,
Or, knowing, how little they prize,
The spring whence my joys ever flow,
Or source of my bitterest sighs!
But both the dear secret reveal,
That Jesus hath soften'd this heart;
And soon all my joys will fulfil,
And bid all my sighing depart.

Nov. 4.—"*Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*" Matt. viii. 7.

We may consider these words as

— An answer to prayer. And let us observe *whose* prayer it was. He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek *ye* me in vain. But this Centurion was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel; a Roman; a Gentile. Yet *he* is immediately heard. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Whoever I am, let me there-

fore apply to him—animated by the assurance, Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Let us observe, also, *what* prayer it was. It was not a prayer for the petitioner himself; but for another. As he never refused any who addressed him on their own behalf; so he never refused any that addressed him on the account of others. Let this teach and encourage us to pray for others. Let friends pray for friends; and parents, for their children; and masters and mistresses, for their servants—We are commanded to pray for all men.

— We may consider the words as an instance of condescension. He was fairer than the children of men; higher than the kings of the earth. All the angels of God worshipped him. Yet no sooner is his goodness implored, than, in a moment, he is ready to go and stand by the side of the pallet of a poor sick slave!—I will come and heal him. The master was very humane and compassionate, or he would not have taken the trouble to send to our Lord, on the behalf of one considered so much below him. What is a slave, to many an owner? No more than a beast of burden. David found an Egyptian in the field, who had eaten no bread nor drunk any water for three days and three nights: "And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days agone I fell sick." A wretch! How unlike him was this Centurion! But he, even *he*, is surprized, and scarcely knows how to accept of the Saviour's offer—Yea, he even deems it condescension to *himself*—*I* am not worthy that *thou* shouldest come under *my* roof. And shall not *we* condescend to men of low estate? "Did not He that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?"

— We may consider the words as a display of power. I will come and attend him—would be the

language of a friend. I will come and pray with him—would be the language of a minister. I will come and examine his case, and see if I can afford him relief—would be the language of the physician. But Jesus speaks like himself—I will come and heal him. He knew his own sufficiency. And the Centurion knew it. It was the principle of his reasoning—"Though I am not the commander-in-chief, but a subordinate officer, yet it is not necessary even for *me* to go to a place, in order to act. My *word* is enough—I say to one of my soldiers, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. How much more, O Lord! are all creatures and events under thy controul! Thy word runneth very swiftly. Neither disease or death can withstand it." So our Saviour understood him. He therefore admired him, and said, I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel. And we should have the same strong confidence in his ability—That he is mighty to save—able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. For

— We may consider the words as affording an emblem of the salvation of the sinner. Whatever some may think of human nature, we are fallen creatures—we are spiritually diseased—and there is no health in us—and we are ready to perish—and are incapable of recovering ourselves—And

> "The help of men and angels join'd
> "Can never reach our case;
> "Nor can we hope relief to find,
> "But in his boundless grace."

But he says, Lo! I come—I will come and heal him. It was the design of his coming in the flesh—The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. It is the purpose of his coming now in the agency of his Grace—I will bring them, says he, health and cure. He heals them, meritoriously,

by his stripes; efficiently, by his Spirit; instrumentally, by his word, ordinances, and providences. The recovery, indeed, he is pleased to carry on by degrees. He could, by one application, yea, by one volition, remove all their complaints: but it does not comport with his wisdom. His people, therefore, continue his patients; and are no more than convalescents all through life. But if slow, the recovery, is sure—Nothing can elude His skill, or baffle his remedy. When dying, they may say, with Baxter, "Almost well"—And when they enter Immanuel's land, there the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick.

Nov. 5.—"*This God is our God for ever and ever.*" Psalm xlviii. 14.

This is the language of a proprietary in God. And it is founded in truth. In the covenant of grace established, not with them, but with the surety, he has, so to speak, made over himself to his people, saying—I will be thy God. I am thine, and all that I have—my perfections; my relations; my works; my word; my ordinances; my dispensations—I am thy salvation—to thee I am all and in all. Hence there is no propriety like this, not only for the value of it, but the reality, too. Justly speaking, nothing else *is* our *own*. Our time is not our own. Our wealth is not our own. Our children are not our own. Our bodies, our souls, are not our own—But God *is* our own—And God, even our *own* God, shall bless us.

It is the language of an assured proprietary. This God is *our* God. The relation may be known and claimed. And with what a repetition does David express it!—"I will love thee, O Lord, *my* strength.

The Lord is *my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer; *my* God, *my* strength, in whom I will trust; *my* buckler, and the horn of *my* salvation, and *my* high tower." Here are no less, in a few words, than eight appropriations. And how desirable is it to be able to ascertain and express our own interest in all his engagements!—

> "When I can say my God is mine,
> "And I can feel thy glories shine,
> "I tread the world beneath my feet,
> "And all that earth calls good and great."

Then I am satisfied with his goodness. But can the thing be made out?—and how? They mistake, who suppose this relation results from our choosing Him, and giving ourselves to him. We do this, indeed; but it is by his grace. And, in us, this is the effect, and not the cause. But as it is the effect, it is therefore the evidence. And in this way we are to trace back the stream to the fountain; making our calling, and thereby our election, sure. If we have chosen Him, we may be assured he has chosen us; and if we love him, we may be assured he loves us: for one is the consequence of the other—We love Him, because he first loved us.

It is the language of a permanent proprietary. This God is our God *for ever and ever*. Without this, the blessedness would make us miserable. The dearer and greater a treasure be, the more alive we are to anxiety and fear; and nothing but the assurance of its safety can enable us cordially to enjoy it. No confidence is so well founded as the Christian's. Every other possession is precarious. Every other relation is breaking up. But he may, he can say, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is the language of an exulting proprietary. Boasting is excluded by the law of faith. But what boasting? All glorying in ourselves—but not in God. "My soul," says David, "shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." "*This* is my beloved, and *this* is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem—What is yours?" So here. *This* God is our God for ever and ever—What is yours, O ye sons of men?

Their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies themselves being judges.

Nov. 6.—"*There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.*" Dan. ii. 28.

DANIEL was perhaps the most blameless character recorded in the Scriptures. Of course *He* is excepted from the comparison, who was "fairer than the children of men."—Neither do we mean to intimate that he was sinless. He had an evil heart to lament before God; but, with regard to his conduct before men, as a professor of religion—nothing is laid to his charge. And what an honour was it to be spoken of, while living—and while young, too—by a prophet—in company with Noah and Job—as one of those who were most likely to have power with God, as intercessors!

Here we see his humility. The king said unto him, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret, which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

Why does he mention this, but because he would prevent the commendation of himself? and that the only wise God should have the glory that was due unto his holy Name? And thus another fine character, jealous of the Divine honour, said to his sovereign, "It is not in me. God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." The most eminent of all characters in the Christian Church also said, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Contrast with these, two of the most famous of the Heathen philosophers and moralists: one of whom said—"That we have riches, is of the gods; but that we have wisdom, is of ourselves." And the other—"A good man is, in one respect, above the gods themselves: for they are good by the necessity of nature; but he is good by choice!"

But what is the praise that Daniel transfers from himself to God? The revelation of secrets. Men are fond of secrets. With regard to themselves, they are always wishful to pry into futurity. Almanacks must therefore have something to feed this humour, or half their number would not be sold. Mistresses, as well as servant-maids; the old, as well as the young; would shew their palms to the fortune-teller, were it not for the fear of ridicule. Were the Witch of Endor alive, many would repair to her; and, like Saul, consult the Devil himself at second-hand.—People, too, are fond of being entrusted with secrets concerning others. But they should not. The very injunction of silence, excites propensity to transgress: and the breach of confidence, when known, often produces disgrace and strife. Envy makes us inquisitive, with regard to rivals; fear, with regard to enemies; and love, with regard to friends. It was curiosity, operating in a way of attachment, that led Peter to enquire after the des-

tination of John—"Lord, and what shall this man do?" But the Lord did not even encourage *this*—"What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

The secret things belong unto God; but things that are revealed are for us, and for our children. Concerning many things, he is silent: and, where he says nothing, we are not to be wise above what is written.

— But He *can* reveal secrets. His understanding is infinite. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

— He *has* revealed secrets. He enabled Daniel to explain the import of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and foretell the succession of the four monarchies. He shewed Moses what the Jews would be, at this very hour. What a Divine prerogative was prophecy! We may conjecture; but we really know not what a day may bring forth. We may argue from causes to effects; but the existence and operation of the causes themselves depend upon the will of another. We may infer from probabilities; but the natural tendencies of things are liable to accidental derangements—and the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Besides, as to the predictions of Scripture, many of them regarded things so remote, that what *immediately* preceded them, could not possibly be discerned. And others regarded events the most unlikely to take place of all occurrences in the world—And yet, when we look into history, we see how it accords with these announcements. How can we account for this, but by admitting, that prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

— He *does* reveal secrets. How many now living has he called out of darkness into his marvel-

ous light! Not that he has communicated to their minds, things new in themselves; but they were new to them. The sun had been shining; but they had been in the dark, because they were blind. All the doctrine was in the Bible before; but he now leads them into all truth; and shews them, not only the reality of Divine things, but their importance and glory. Give a man a taste for a book of music, or science of any kind; and he will see a thousand things entirely new to him, though he possessed the work before. So "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: but the spiritual judgeth all things." So the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he shews them his covenant, as to their interest in its engagements and provisions. And what a discovery is this! How anxious will every awakened mind be to possess it!

"Oh! tell me that my worthless name
"Is graven on thy hands;
"Shew me some promise in thy book
"Where my salvation stands!"

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. And what is the promise? "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."—He also shews them the secrets of his providence, as well as of his grace. They know what he is doing, and what he will do. They know that he is fulfilling his own word, and making all things to work together for their good. They know, that "behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face;" and that even when he slays them, they have reason to trust in him. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?

prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

— He *will* reveal secrets. Yes; there is "a day, in the which," says the Apostle, "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel." Then will be developed—dreadful secrets. Then many, who had a name here, will be disowned. They had honoured Him with their lips, and gained the notice of their fellow-creatures; but their hearts had been far from Him. And what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?—Pleasing secrets. Then, they who are now deemed the enemies of the Cross of Christ, will be found to have been its friends. Then, they who are now considered as indifferent to holiness and good works, will appear to have mourned for sin, and prayed for purity. Then, the tear dropped upon the Bible in the closet; the private act of charity; the frequent intercession for others; will be displayed and commended—He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God.—Divine secrets. He will shew, why he permitted the entrance of moral evil; delayed so long the coming of his Son; suffered his Gospel to be so impeded, and his Church to be so afflicted; and more than justify all his ways to men. What is now perplexing, will be made plain. What now seems disorderly, will be arranged. What now seems jarring, will be harmonized. What now seems defective, will be complete. And then, not as now, from faith, but from sight, the acknowledgment will be made, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." To many, these mysteries are already explained—When shall we have an inheritance with the saints in light?

Nov. 7.—"*For neither did his brethren believe in him.*" John vii. 5.

How is this charge to be understood? Two distinctions or limitations are necessary. First. It cannot be taken literally as to the name—"his brethren." Even those who very properly reject the notion of her perpetual virginity, do not suppose that these were really the children of Mary, our Lord's mother. The question which divides the ancients and the moderns turns upon this—whether they were the offspring of Joseph, by a former marriage; or whether they were born of Salome, Mary's sister, and so were our Lord's cousins-german. The latter is the more probable conclusion. Among the Jews, kinsmen in various degrees were called brethren. Abraham and Lot were uncle and nephew; yet, says the former to the latter, "We are brethren." The meaning therefore is, that our Lord's more near and remote kindred did not believe on him. But, secondly; this cannot be taken universally, as to the fact. For three of his brethren, at least, were found in the number of his apostles—Simon, and Jude, and James the less, who is expressly called the Lord's brother. The Scripture does not gratify our curiosity; we know but little of Mary's or Joseph's relations: they seem to have been numerous; and the language before us must intimate that not only some, but comparatively many of them, had no real faith in him.

This is a very surprising announcement. But it is very instructive. Does it not favour the truth of Christianity? Had all our Lord's relations recommended and followed him, his cause might have looked human and suspicious. We know what advantage Mahomet derived from the attachment and employment of his kindred. But here every appearance of family contrivance is excluded; and we see that our Lord did not act by rules of carnal policy: his kingdom was not of this world; his Gospel was

left to its own evidence and energy; and derived no assistance from the auxiliaries of error, superstition, or idolatry.

We see also what evidence may be resisted, and what means may be rendered ineffectual, by the depravity of human nature. These men had attended his preaching, and he spake as never man spake. They had often heard his conversation. They had received many instructions, reproofs, and encouragements from him, in a manner the most adapted to insure success. They had gone up with him to the festivals, and had seen his devotion. Some of them were present when he turned the water into wine. They had seen him open the eyes of the blind. Yes, these very men, "his brethren, therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." As his relations, they must have known the circumstances of his birth; the appearance of the angel to the shepherds; the journey of the wise men; the prophesying of Simeon and Anna; the testimony of John; the descent of the Holy Ghost in his baptism; his holy and heavenly life—Nevertheless, such were their prejudices and worldly dispositions, that they did not believe on him. It was not *evidence* they wanted; nor is it a want of evidence that induces persons to reject him now. The source of infidelity is not intellectual, but moral. Were it not criminal, it would not be punishable. But this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world; but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. We think some means *must* be irresistible—but we forget that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked—Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

And from hence, we need not wonder if inferior

characters are unsuccessful in their pious attempts. Ministers may be faithful and zealous, and yet be constrained to complain, "Who hath believed our report?" Masters may be wise and good: yet what a servant had Elisha, in Gehazi! Parents should do every thing in their power for the spiritual welfare of their children; and, in a general way, they may hope for success: but let them not wonder if, in some instances, even their tears, and examples, and entreaties, are in vain!

Let those who have irreligious relatives think of Jesus. He was in this point tempted as they are. He can sympathise with them. He remembers the feelings of his heart, when even his own kindred turned away from him.

Hence none will be saved by mere relationship. Let none say, therefore, within themselves, we have Abraham to our father. The parable tells us of one in hell, who called Abraham father; and was refused by him the least gratification. It is a mercy to have pious connexions; but religion is a personal thing; and if we refuse to tread in their steps, the blessing will be turned into a curse: and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; and we ourselves shut out.

Finally. It is better to be of the spiritual kindred of Jesus, than of his family according to the flesh. When, therefore, the woman exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" he himself replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." The spiritual relation to him can never be dissolved: and it will insure every thing essential to our safety, honour, wealth, power, and happiness, for ever. As the natural relation to him was not saving, so it was necessarily confined to few. But this lies open to all. "Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring

to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Nov. 8.—"*And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with Publicans and sinners?*" Matt. ix. 11.

This is connected with a concise narrative of the conversion of the Writer of this Gospel. For the account *of* himself, is furnished *by* himself.—It is a delicate thing for a man to write concerning himself: but the Sacred Authors are above all suspicion. They are always faithful and impartial; and their only aim is truth. Though Matthew here speaks of himself, the reference was unavoidable; and he only introduces the servant, for the sake of the Master.

The case was this. After leaving the privacy of Nazareth, our Lord came and dwelt in Capernaum. This town, as it was situated on the lake of Galilee, gave him an opportunity to pass easily in the fishing boats of his followers to any parts of the adjoining country—"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man sitting at the receipt of custom:" that is, he was receiving the tolls from the goods landed, and embarked on the Quay. As Luke tells us, that he made a great feast, and bade many, it is probable he was possessed of considerable property; and, from the common character of publicans, we might be tempted to conclude, that it was the produce of illegal exaction. But it would be invidious to

draw such an inference. Even a publican was not necessarily wicked: and the consciousness Zaccheus had, of freedom from extortion, is obvious from his appeal; "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." It is even the duty of official agents to be exact and full in lawful demands. We will therefore take it for granted, that Matthew was rightfully engaged when our Saviour took knowledge of him; and, as Divine favour has been shewn towards many others recorded in the Scriptures, while filling up the duties of their station, we learn that diligence in our calling is acceptable to God, as well as approved of men. The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds while keeping their flocks by night, and announced the birth of the Messiah. Saul was seeking his father's asses when Samuel met him, and anointed him king over Israel. While drawing water at the well, Rebecca, and Rachael, and Zipporah, found each a husband—The woman of Samaria found the Saviour of the world.

Here it may be asked, Was our Lord's thus meeting with Matthew, the effect of chance, or of design? To this question, we boldly answer, Of design. There is nothing accidental in the conversion of a sinner—If a man be saved, and called with a holy calling in time, it is according to God's purpose and grace given him in Christ Jesus before the world began.

— "And he saith to him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him." He hath a mighty voice. He upholds all things by the word of his power. By the same word he made them all. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. He said, Let there be light, and there was light. So it was in the old creation; and in the new, he calleth things which are not, and they appear. As the address was instantaneous, so the obedience was immediate. What a change did the call produce in the soul of this man! How did it enlighten his mind, and inflame

his heart! Doubtless his head was filled with worldly cares; but this voice, like a charm, dispossesses him. The meanness of our Saviour's appearance, and the lowness of his attendants, weigh nothing with him. He was now in prosperity; he was to leave a gainful office; and perhaps saw before him only reproach and persecution: but he is satisfied; and would rather be a poor minister of Christ, than a rich officer of Cæsar. In a case of such magnitude, it might be supposed that he would have required some time to consider and examine matters. But, like Paul, he confers not with flesh and blood. The King's business requires haste. True obedience is always prompt and unreserved—He immediately followed him. O blessed Jesus, may thy call to us be so effectual, that *when* thou sayest, "Seek ye my face;" our hearts may answer, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek." And, at thy bidding, may we arise, and forsaking every carnal pursuit and worldly attachment, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth!

Though Matthew formally surrendered his office, and all its concerns, we have no reason to believe that he sacrificed his effects. Rather, we are persuaded, that he carefully secured them, to be properly used and applied. Whatever we possess at the time of our calling, may be consecrated to the Redeemer, and advantageously employed in his service, and the cause of benevolence. And when the heart is open, the hand and the house cannot be shut. Matthew therefore makes an entertainment for our Lord, and "behold, many Publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples." These persons had formerly visited Matthew; partly for business, and partly for pleasure: now they came, invited by him with the hope of their deriving benefit from our Saviour's conversation. "Who knows," says he, "but the voice that has reached my heart, may also call them by his grace?" How invariably is such a disposition found in every subject of Divine grace!

Come with us, said Moses to Hobab, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. O taste and see, says David, that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Come and see him, said the woman of Samaria to her neighbours. In the same spirit, Matthew makes a feast, to which he calls his old friends and companions. And our Saviour gave them the cheerful, though not the sinful meeting: teaching us thereby not to be repulsive in our manners—nor to refuse social intercourse. Of two things, however, we should be careful—To design good, as our Saviour did, when we enter company—and also to remember the difference there is between him and us. He had no corruption within, for temptation to operate upon; while we are easily receptive of corrupt impressions; and must always watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation.

— But the Pharisees (pious souls!), when they saw this, were scandalized. Yet, as Satan always loves to get over the hedge where the fence is lowest; and as he assailed Eve apart from her husband: so they, from fear, do not express their dissatisfaction to our Lord himself; but "said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with Publicans and sinners?" What did they mean? It was the tradition of the Elders, that the sanctified and devout should never be seen in company with the wicked. Affecting superior sanctity, they acted upon this principle themselves; and said, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me; I am holier than thou." And they here insinuate, that if Jesus was what he professed to be, he would shun such characters as he was now with. And they seem even to feel a concern for his honour. All this was mere pretence, supported by malice and envy. They were strangers to every feeling of piety or benevolence. They strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. They made long prayers for a pretence, and devoured widows' houses. They were

wolves in sheep's clothing: sepulchres painted without, and full of rottenness within.

If we are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, we shall be severe towards ourselves, and candid towards others. We shall see more evil in our own hearts, than we can ever see in the conduct of our fellow-creatures. And though, in proportion as we are pure and heavenly, we *must* feel whatever is contrary thereto—we shall bewail it before God, rather than complain of it to men. And never shall we, when the character is fair, and the life blameless, go a motive-hunting, and indulge in the vileness of suspicion. Let us not judge, that we be not judged. Let us remember, that he who knows what is in man, represents censoriousness as the *offspring* and *proof* of hypocrisy. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." O for more of that charity, that "thinketh no evil; that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!"

Nov. 9.—"*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*" Matt. ix. 12.

To perceive the force of these words, we must remember the design of them. They are in justification of

our Lord's conduct. Matthew, having been called by his grace to follow him, made an entertainment, to which he invited his former friends and companions; hoping that they might derive advantage from the intercourse. But when the Pharisees saw it, they were offended, and said to his disciples, "Why eateth your Master with Publicans and sinners?" Though the murmur was not addressed to *himself*, it *concerned* himself; and he was acquainted with it: and though the complainers were undeserving of his notice—and he was under no obligation to vindicate what he was doing—he said, "I am about my proper business. I have not mistaken the objects of my attention. I came to seek and to save that which was lost. I could now have been enjoying the company of angels in heaven. My mixing, on such an occasion, with publicans and sinners, is not agreeable in itself—but I entered the world as a physician. Where should a physician be, but among the disordered and dying? They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

The vindication insinuates the real condition of mankind. They are diseased. We refer to their moral maladies. The soul has its disorders, as well as the body—and the disorders of the soul are worse than those of the body. They vitiate a nobler part; they expose to a greater danger. The consequence of the one, is only temporal death; the result of the other is death eternal. These maladies are the effects of the Fall; and they may be seen in the errors of the judgmeet—the rebellion of the will—the pollution of the conscience—the sensuality of the affections—the debasement and violence of the passions. We are sometimes blamed for degrading human nature. But we do not undervalue it, as the workmanship of God; or as to its physical and intellectual powers: but only as to its moral state and propensities. And here, not only the language of the Liturgy, but all Scripture, and history, and

observation, and experience, proclaim, that "there is no health in us."

It also gives an implied character of himself. He is every thing that fallen, perishing creatures can need: and he stands in the same relation to them, as a physician to his patients. "I am the Lord that healeth thee," is a proclamation that well becomes his lips. Job disclaimed his friends, as "physicians of no value." But this can never be applied to the Lord Jesus. In all things, in this office, he has the pre-eminence. Yea, he not only stands without comparison, but alone—there is salvation in none other. But *he heals* every complaint. No case, however difficult, baffles his skill. No case, however desperate, resists the power of his applications. He is always at home. Always accessible. Always delighted to attend. He only requires our submission to his management. He cures, without money and without price.

It also describes those who disregard, and those who value him. They who reject him, are "the whole." None are *really* whole: for there is none righteous; no, not one. But they are so, as to apprehension and experience. And such have always been awfully numerous. Such was Paul, "while alive without the law once." Such was the Pharisee that went up into the temple to pray. Such were all the Pharisees, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Such were the Laodiceans, who said, We are all rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. Such were Solomon's generation, who were pure in their own eyes, and not washed from their filthiness. Such, also, are they who, though they make no pretensions to self-righteousness, are satisfied with themselves; the careless; the worldly, who live without one serious thought of their souls and eternity. Yea, such, too, are they who receive the charge in theory, and acknowledge it, as they do any other Bible sentiment;

but there rest—not impressed with the truth, so as to urge them to the Saviour—and so he will profit them nothing.

—They who value him, are "the sick." They are sensible of their malady. They have a clear and deep conviction of their guilt, and depravity, and helplessness. They are thrown into the consternation persons would feel, if they discovered they had taken the plague. They feel pain. They forebode death. They exclaim, What must I do to be saved! They no longer relish their former pursuits and pleasures. They loathe sin, and can never be reconciled to it again. Their cure engages all their solicitude. And, finding that there is a Saviour, and a great one, they are soon at his feet, crying, "Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." How infinitely desirable and delightful does the Physician now appear! Who, but He? They cheerfully put themselves under his care. They implicitly follow his orders. Their motto is, "If by any means." Their inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" With what eagerness do they enquire after symptoms of cure! With what pleasure do they perceive and feel signs of returning health! "I bless God I have a little appetite for the bread of life—I have a little strength for spiritual exercises—Perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever—Forsake not the work of thine own hands."

Nov. 10.—"*I am the resurrection, and the life.*" John xi. 25.

THERE is a spiritual resurrection and life, which all the subjects of Divine grace derive from him. But here the sense is determined by the connexion. "Thy

brother," said he to Martha, "shall rise again." But as he did not specify the time, she feared to apply the assurance to her present distress, or supposed that the consolation was to be drawn from the general resurrection. "Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." To excite her immediate hope, he reminds her of his own character and resources; and says, "*I* am the resurrection and the life." There must be a very peculiar relation between him and the resurrection to life, to justify the strength of this language. It may be exemplified in various illustrations.

He is the resurrection and the life, as he is the announcer of the doctrine. For it is a truth of pure revelation. Reason could never have discovered it. The men of wisdom at Athens, the Stoical and the Epicurean philosophers, however widely they differed from each other, agreed in deriding this sentiment; and deemed Paul a babbler for preaching it.—How inexplicable the re-union, and re-animation of our scattered dust!—Where now are the bodies that trod the earth before the Flood! But even these bodies, through whatever changes they have passed, shall be restored and revived! Even Adam and Eve in their flesh shall see God, and be clothed in higher perfection than Eden ever knew! But *who* abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel? It is true that David, and even Job, rejoiced in the expectation of this glorious event; and many allusions and expressions in the Old Testament shew, that the Jewish Church not only believed in a future state, but in the redemption of the body from the grave. But the Book in which they are contained, is called, "the Word of Christ;" and the Spirit that testifieth these things, is called, "the Spirit of Christ." For as the sun scatters some light before his rising; so the Saviour commenced his discoveries before his incarnation: he rejoiced in

the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. But by-and-by he came in person, and preached the kingdom of heaven. How simple and sublime were his discourses! And with what an awful motive did he commend his doctrine to every man's conscience in the sight of God. He drew back the veil that hid the future, and presented the elements on fire, the opening tombs, and the dead rising to meet their Judge—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." He also ordered his apostles to go forth and publish, and also record it; and they did so, the Lord working with them, and confirming their word with signs following.

He is the resurrection and the life, as he affords the pledge. Under each of the three distinguishing periods of the world, the body, as well as the soul, had been received up into glory. Before the Flood, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not, for God took him. The Law beheld Elijah elevated to heaven in a chariot of fire. In the days of the Gospel, Jesus Christ passed through the regions of the dead, and reached the crown he now wears. And there is a union between him and his people. He is the head, and they are the members; and because he lives, they shall live also. Yea, says the Apostle, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

He is the resurrection and the life, as he procures the privilege. To him we meritoriously owe all the blessings we possess. Are we justified and sanc-

tified? In the Lord we have righteousness and strength. And are we raised from the dead? "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." He has redeemed our whole nature; and the body being ransomed, as well as the spirit, by no less a price than his own blood, shall be equally claimed, and renewed, and glorified.

"This living hope we owe
"To Jesus' dying love;
"We would adore his grace below,
"And sing his power above."

He is the resurrection and the life, as he is the pattern. For we shall rise, not like Adam, but like him. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." In his rising from the dead, we see the model of our own resurrection; and the grandeur of our own destiny. We imagine, says Paul, whatever is admirable and splendid in his glorified humanity; and we look for nothing less in ourselves—"We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." At present the body is vile: not as the workmanship of God; but as defiled by sin, as degraded by disease, and especially as the spoil of worms, and in the corruption of the grave. What a hindrance! what a burden! what a loathsomeness is the body of this death! But then, by

a change the most marvellous, it will have the same excellencies as the body of God. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

He is the resurrection and the life, as he achieves the work. Hence he said to his hearers, "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." What a power will this require! But nothing is too hard for him. His almighty fiat will, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, pervade the depths of the sea; penetrate the recesses of the earth; and gather the remnants of death, and give them organization, and life, and sight, and voice—for ever!

Happy they who are the children of the resurrection; and who will be able to welcome the Restorer of all things—Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

For though, as an event, the resurrection will be universal; as a privilege, it will be limited. Every eye will see him. But how many will wail because of him!

Nov. 11.—"*I rejoice in thy salvation.*"
1 Sam. ii. 1.

These are the words of Hannah, a very pious and highly accomplished female, to whom the Jews were

so much indebted for one of their best public characters. For Samuel was given in answer to her prayers; he was trained and formed by her instructions; and he was early dedicated to God, at the expense of her self-denial. She also edified her own generation, and she continues to edify ours, by her composition—"Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord: mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I REJOICE IN THY SALVATION."—Let us notice this part of her song, and let us take the subject in the highest sense of which it is susceptible. There are many salvations which God accomplishes. But there is one that excelleth in glory, and to which the term is pre-eminently, if not exclusively, applied. In this salvation every believer rejoices.

He rejoices in the discovery of it. He is pained indeed to think, that as yet multitudes of his fellow-creatures have never heard of it; and he prays that his way may be made known on earth, his saving health among all nations. But he is grateful that to him is the word of this salvation sent. There was a time, indeed, when he treated it with indifference; but when he began to see and feel his perishing condition; and to exclaim, with the jailor, What must I do to be saved? he received this intelligence as Hagar did the angel's kindness, when he opened her eyes, and shewed her a well: or as the Grecians heard the Roman Consul's proclamation of liberty; when they cried for hours, Soter, Soter—Saviour, Saviour!

He rejoices in the properties of this salvation. In the freeness of it—that it requires no qualifications, no conditions; and is without money, and without price. In the purity of it—that it not only contains pardoning mercy, but sanctifying grace; and is designed to save him from his sins, which he now feels to be his worst enemies. In the perpetuity of it—that He who begins a good work will

perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; that he who believes *hath* everlasting life, and shall *never* come into condemnation. In the extensiveness of it—that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time; and that this salvation is prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

He rejoices in the hope of it. This hope admits of various degrees, and the joy will be influenced by them. The lowest degree of it may serve to keep the mind from despair: as a weak bough will sustain a man drowning, till a firmer support comes to his relief. But there is a lively hope; there is an abounding in hope; there is the full assurance of hope—this will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In other cases, thousands rejoice in hope, who will never obtain possession of the object of it. But the hope of Christians maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them.

He rejoices in the experience of it. For he not only apprehends it as a desirable and future good; but he has a present actual participation of it. He feels the influence of it, in his conscience, in his heart, in his life. And if a man be not saved on this side the grave, he will never be saved on the other. "We," says the Apostle, "who have believed, do enter into rest." And, "Blessed," says David, "*is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

He rejoices in the completion of it. For, though now he is enlightened, yet it is with the illumination of the dawn, not of the day. Though now he is sanctified, he is renewed but in part. Though justified and adopted, he does not always know his condition, and never enjoys all the privileges of it. He has *the* earnests, but not the inheritance: a few of the

grapes of Eshcol, but not the vineyards of Canaan. But when that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away. In pursuit of which, he can say, with David, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is *fulness* of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be *satisfied*, when I awake, with thy likeness."

And yet the Enemy of souls tells the young, that religion is an utter enemy to enjoyment! Yet the world supposes that Zion is the metropolis of gloom and sadness. But, "as well the singers, as the players on instruments, are *there*." And they who have made the trial, know that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. And the God of truth has said—"Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." Christians have a thousand things to rejoice in; but this is the chief, *the salvation of God*. And there is enough in *this* to inspire joy in the midst of every loss and trial. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Nov. 12.—"*So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.*" Deut. xxxii. 12.

CONSISTENCY is a quality which a writer finds it no easy thing to maintain, when he brings forward a

character. The higher, and the more peculiar, and the more original the character be, the more is the difficulty increased. But when God is introduced, the difficulty becomes supreme. For, "to whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." From their knowledge of the general principles of their nature, which are the same in all, men may, with tolerable accuracy, speak of men; and describe how an individual would act in a given relation or condition. But for men to speak of God; and so represent him in all his attributes and actions, as that nothing shall fall short of an infinitely perfect Being; is what never would have been accomplished without inspiration. But we find this in the Scriptures; because holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And hence, though the Sacred Writers bring God forth in every page; we may almost say, in every sentence; he always appears in character; that is, in character with himself.

One thing, however, must be admitted—and it is by no means inconsistent with this—that, in the revelation with which we have been favoured, God has conformed himself to our modes of apprehension and expression. This was necessary, to render him at once intelligible and impressive. This therefore shews us, not only his wisdom, but condescension —and dignity is never degraded by condescension. Thus he speaks unto us, as unto children, with whom imitation is every thing; and levies a tax upon all the world of nature, to furnish images of himself.

There is no relation he so commonly assumes as the parental. Nor need we wonder at this, when we consider—that there is combined in it, every thing at once venerable and endearing—that it appeals to the present sympathies of the heart—and aids our devotion by means even of our very instincts. And observe how he assumes it. Sometimes he takes the affection of the father: and we read—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them

that fear him"—"I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Sometimes he appropriates the tenderness of the mother: and we read—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." At other times, he descends lower; and borrows from the animal, and especially the feathered, tribes: and we read—"He shall cover thee with his feathers; and under his wings shalt thou trust"—"How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not"—"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."

Observe a Divine agency—The *Lord led him.* The allusion is to the Jews: and the meaning is, that God conducted them in their journeyings to Canaan. They were very numerous: but the aggregate of them all, was to him like an infant. "I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt." "He led them by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." "He led them about, he instructed them, he kept them as the apple of his eye."

See, also, the exclusive application of this work—"The Lord *alone* did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." The idols of the Heathen were acknowledged to be limited in their powers. None of them could do every thing—there were therefore lords many, and gods many. There was a god for every exigency: a god for the sea—a god for the winds—a god for the field—a god for the garden—a god for marriage—and a god for war—and so of the rest. But, said the Church, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." And He himself said, "O Israel! the Lord thy God is one Lord." *He* wrought out every deliverance for them. *He* conferred every blessing upon them—and, having done the work without any helper,

he deserved all the praise; and assigns this, as a reason, why they should not divide their regards between him and any other. "*I* removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. Thou calledst in trouble, and *I* delivered thee; *I* answered thee in the secret place of thunder; *I* proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me—there shall no strange god be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange god."

Here is also a resemblance of the manner in which it was performed—"*So* the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." How? "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings."

All this is not to be confined to the Jews—There is also a spiritual Israel, whom they were intended to prefigure; the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. And such a people he now has for his Name; and he is leading them; leading them alone, without any one to divide with him the work, or share with him the glory. And how does he this? Let us not torture the image; but let us improve it. Three things are here ascribed to the mother-eagle—not in providing for her young; for this is not the subject in question—but in educating them; in teaching them to fly. She stirreth up her nest. She fluttereth over her young. She spreadeth abroad her wings, and taketh them, and beareth them on her wings. And all this is applicable to God, in his dealings with us, and preparing us to seek those things that are above.

Nov. 13.—"*As an eagle stirreth up her nest.*"
Deut. xxxii. 11.

— SHE sees the eaglets nestling, blinking, and dozing; and she wishes them to fly—Arise, says she—but they refuse—She then stirs up the nest—shakes it; turns out the inside; separates, scatters the parts. That is, she either destroys the nest, or makes it so uncomfortable, that the young ones move out upon the neighbouring boughs, where they are in a posture for flight. God does the same with us—He stirs up our nest.

First. As to our outward condition in the world. This was the case with the Jews. Egypt had been their abode; where, in the infancy of their state, they were lodged like birds in a nest; and though it was an impure one, and much straitened and confined them, they evinced no care to leave it. And it is easy to see, that if they had been well treated, and enjoyed the smiles of the government, and the former advantages of Goshen; Moses might have called long enough before they would have come out. But there arose another king, that knew not Joseph, who evil entreated them, and made their lives bitter by reason of cruel bondage. Their burdens were intolerable; their tasks impracticable; their complaints were turned into insults; their daughters were for slaves, and their sons for slaughter—And now they sigh for deliverance; and are willing to go forth, even into a wilderness, at the Divine call—Thus God stirred up their nest. Manasseh was the son of good Hezekiah: but every pious principle of his education had been corrupted by power, wealth, and pleasure. He became proverbial for wickedness; and would have gone on till he had filled up the measure of his iniquity—But God stirred up his nest. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." What brought the Prodigal to his senses, and made him think of home? A mighty famine in the land—he began to be in want. How many, now living, can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word!" *You* had health: but sickness invaded your frame; and you have been made to possess months of vanity, and have had wearisome nights appointed for you. *You* prospered in business: but your purposes were broken off; your schemes failed; you were put back in life, and compelled to begin the world afresh. *You* had a wife of your bosom: but the Lord took away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. *You* had a favourite child, on whom you placed many a flattering expectation: but at an early grave you sighed, "Thou destroyest the hope of man"—and now, at your meals, you see David's seat is empty—and you often retire, and sigh, "Childhood and youth are vanity." And what is all this, but his stirring up your nest? and, by a sad, but salutary necessity, constraining you to turn from time to eternity; from the creature to Himself, the supreme good? And what a mercy, if you can *now* say—

"*Now* to the shining realms above,
"I stretch my hands, and glance mine eyes:
"O for the pinions of a dove,
"To bear me to the upper skies!

"There, from the bosom of my God,
"Oceans of endless pleasure roll:
"*There* would I fix my last abode,
"And drown the sorrows of the soul."

Secondly. As to our self-righteous confidence and security. We have naturally a good opinion of ourselves; and the Enemy of souls loves to cherish it.

He therefore keeps his palace and his goods in peace. He dreads a stir in the conscience. He knows that we must be humbled, before we are exalted; wounded, before we can be healed; and be emptied of self, before we can be filled with all the fulness of God. This state of mind must therefore be disturbed and destroyed, before any thing like genuine religion can commence. And what does God? By the conviction of sin, like a general at the head of an army, he enters the soul—and the man no more says, Peace, peace—his hopes are fled—he is reduced to self-despair—and his only cry is, "What must I do to be saved?" His worldly friends are alarmed for him: but they who know what is the way of the Spirit, rejoice—not that he is made sorry; but that he sorrows after a godly sort. And the subject [illegible] change himself, may mistake the nature and design of the operation; and conclude that he is going to be destroyed. But if the Lord had a mind to kill him, he would not have shewn him such things as these. Thus it was with Paul. See how his nest was feathered with self-righteousness; and see how it was stirred up—"I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

Thirdly. As to our departure from life. We are not to remain here always; and it is no little difficulty to break up our attachment to the present state; and to make us willing to leave it. But see how this is done.—After a number of years, we have a feeling persuasion, that this is not our rest; that creatures are broken reeds; that the earth is a vale of tears; that the world is vanity and vexation of spirit; and having looked through every scene here, we wish for another and a nobler region of existence.—Then, too, our powers begin to fail us. Pains and infirmities grow upon us. Our decaying senses shut us out by degrees from former

objects and pursuits. The days are come wherein we have no pleasure. Hearing fails. They that look out of the window are darkened. Fear is in the way. The grasshopper is a burden—

"Our vitals, with laborious strife,
"Bear up the crazy load;
"And drag the dull remains of life
"Along the tiresome road."

— And when we look around, where now, are the relations and friends that once rendered life delightful? Lover and friend he has put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness. We seem more, and better related to another world, than this—We feel the drawings of those who are gone—"What have I here? and what do I here?"—And now the hope of usefulness ceases to detain us. How can I glorify God? or serve my generation? Why should I remain a cumberer of the ground, when so many fine and fruitful trees are cut down?—And now we become better acquainted with the heavenly world we have more nearly approached—O what darkness here! and what sunshine there! What bondage here! and what liberty there!—There no law in the members warring against the law of the mind—There no complaint, when I would do good, evil is present with me—Is not this worth dying for?—Then the earnests and foretastes of the glory to which we are going, render every thing else comparatively insipid; and the grapes of Eshcol make us long for the vineyards of Canaan—And thus the Lord stirs up the nest of life itself; and gets the heir of immortality upon the perch for his departure—where he is able to say,

"There is a house not made with hands,
"Eternal, and on high;
"And here my spirit, waiting, stands
"Till God shall bid it fly."

Nov. 14.—" — *Fluttereth over her young.*"
Deut. xxxii. 11.

— This she does to excite and teach them by her own example. And God does the same with regard to us. The eye does much more than the ear. The advantage derivable from example, is universally allowed. It not only aids in the illustration of a subject, but also in the impression and influence of it; as it helps the memory, strikes the fancy, reproves indolence, encourages hope, and fires zeal. Wise teachers will therefore always teach as much as possible by example.

— How sad is the state of those who are destitute of this advantage in religion! And there are those to be found who have scarcely an instance of godliness within their reach. We pity the son who has indeed a father who instructs him, and by his own example, too—but it is to swear; to profane the Sabbath; to despise the House of God. We pity the daughter who has indeed a mother who leads her, and by her own example, too—but it is to idolize her person; to read novels and romances—not the words of eternal life; to repair to places of dissipation—not to the Throne of the Heavenly Grace. Is there an individual perusing this page, who is stationed in a neighbourhood, or a family, where he can find no one with whom he can unite in any religious exercise; who moves on alone; and even, perhaps, through reproach and opposition? Let him remember, that this may not be the case always. If he walks in wisdom towards them that are without, his endeavours, in time, may be available; and his prayers be heard: and though he has been denied the advantage of *having* an example, he may have the honour of *becoming* one, and of leading others into the way everlasting.

— But there are few places now, in which there are not some instances of Divine grace, sufficient to

condemn the world, and to encourage those whose faces are Zionward. Some, perhaps, have many godly persons around them—and they see how superior these are to other men. How content! How grateful! How supported in trouble! How hopeful in death! Some have pious friends and relations. You have, perhaps, a sister, who often entreats you. Or a wife, who endeavours to win you. Or a father, who says, My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Or a mother, who weeps over you, and exclaims, What, my son! and the son of my womb! and the son of my vows! And what is all this, but God teaching and exciting you? And if you can read, you have an additional advantage. How many excellent lives have been published! How many fine characters are pourtrayed in the Scriptures! And, by the perusal of all these, you bring a cloud of witnesses and examples before you. And when you see them in the exercise and display of whatsoever is lovely and of good report, do you not see God in all this, like the eagle, fluttering over her young?

But look at him in his more personal conduct. See how he not only teaches and excites by his word, but by his own example. Does he command us to be merciful? He is merciful; rich in mercy—he delighteth in mercy. Does he enjoin us to give? He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us richly all things to enjoy. He spared not his own Son. Does he require us to forgive? He is ready to pardon. He abundantly pardons—"Love your enemies," says he; "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is not an optional thing with us—we *must* resemble

him; and are only religious, in proportion as we are like him, and are one spirit with him. To render his example the more engaging, we were going to say—he humanized it. God was manifest in the flesh. And this rendered his example—not only the more attractive, but even the more complete. For it is obvious, that he could not have been our example, and have gone before us, in the exercise of any of those graces, or the performance of any of those duties, which imply dependence, submission, and suffering; unless he had become incarnate. The Word, therefore, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Divine Goodness walked up and down the earth, for three-and-thirty years, in human form. Here was visible the Image of the invisible God. The Sovereign comes down, and goes before his subjects, to excite and allure them—See, says he; I obey, to teach you to obey—I suffer, to teach you how to suffer—I die, to make you fearless of death—"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

Let ministers learn from hence to be parental, rather than magisterial; and to do more by influence than authority—"Neither as being lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock." This is what Paul enjoined on his son, Timothy: "Be thou an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." And what was his own practice? "As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

And let parents remember this image! Do, as well as teach. Be amiable. Render your religion inviting. Let your children *see* it, rather than hear it. Come near them—attach them—draw them.

"And as the bird each fond endearment tries,
"To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies;
"Employ each *art*; reprove each dull delay;
"*Allure* to brighter worlds, and *lead* the way."

Nov. 15.—"*—Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings.*" Deut. xxxii. 11.

This is to aid, and also to secure them. When they mount her back, they are little aware of her design; but she sails away with them—and sometimes, she shakes them off. Then they must fly themselves—But she follows after—She hovers near them: and when their pinions flag, and they are unable to keep longer on the wing, with surprising speed and skill, she darts and places herself underneath them; and thus receiving their whole weight, she prevents their fall, succours their weakness, and refreshes them for another flight. The Lord never entirely leaves his people—and it is well he does not: for without him they can do nothing. He does, however, in a degree leave them, to make them more sensible of their weakness, and induce them to rely more upon himself: but not so as to hazard their safety—Thus the mother, when her infant, beginning to walk, is too venturesome, leaves him alone—not to go over a plank across a river; but in the room with her; and upon the carpet; where the fall will alarm and caution—not kill, or fracture him—And she soon takes him up, and presses him to her bosom and her lips. God has himself

(how much we need to teach and affect us!) employed another tender image. When young and feeble, the day perhaps warm, and the ground rough, the little lambs are unable to keep pace with the flock, and would be left panting and bleating behind: but the Shepherd of Israel gathers them with his arm, and carries them in his bosom.

Many are not convinced of their weakness, because they have never made, in earnest, a trial of their strength. But when a man begins to apply himself to the purposes of the Divine life, he feels how unable he is to do any thing, as of himself: and he would never be induced to take one step, effectually, in a religious course, without such an assurance as the Gospel presents. Possibility, probability, is not enough: he must hear the voice that cries, "My grace *is* sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And he does hear this. And, though much is required and expected of him, he sees all the means necessary to the end. He sees a cause more than adequate to the effect. It is a great thing to be a Christian: but "OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD."

He has said, "I will strengthen them in the Lord:" and, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." He aids them by his providence. And by communion with each other. And in the ordinances of religion. Ministers are "helpers of their joy." His word quickens them. His statutes help them. In the holy assemblies, and at the Table of their dying Lord, while they wait upon him, he renews their strength; and they mount up with wings, as eagles; and they run, and are not weary; and they walk, and not faint. But all these are only the means—the Holy Spirit is the agent—Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Our dependence upon him is entire. We pray in the Spirit. We live in the Spirit. We walk in the Spirit. He leads us into all truth. He seals us unto the day of

redemption. But for his influence, who would not every moment despond and sink?

But the eagle, by taking and bearing her young on her wings, not only sustains and supports them, but protects and secures them. Is an enemy in sight? She soars with them above his reach. Does the archer discharge his arrows from below? They must pierce through her body before they can touch them. "The path of life is above, to the wise, to depart from hell beneath." And God is the refuge, as well as the strength, of his people. And to each of them he says, what David said to Abiathar, when he fled to him from the slaughter of Saul—"Abide with me; fear not: for he that seeketh thy life, seeketh my life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." When they can realize this, their soul dwells at ease. This is sometimes their privilege—it ought to be always their experience. Their security is always the same: but Paul was *persuaded* of it—"I am *persuaded*," says he, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nov. 16.—"*Thy hidden ones.*" Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways.

First. As referring to their safety. We often hide, only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the Parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field; "which, when a man

hath found, he hideth it." His aim is not to conceal, but to secure: and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world, could not *find* him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "Come, my people," said He, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." Hence the promise, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "all the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For He himself is their "refuge;" their "hiding-place"—They are his hidden ones.

Secondly. As intimating their concealment. This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of their spiritual life. Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ, in God: and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following: "When he who is our life shall *appear*, *we* also shall *appear* with him in glory." The source, principles, and actings, of this life, are unintelligible to natural men; neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The heart of the believer only feels his own bitterness: and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. The manna upon which he feeds, is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver. His grief is too deep to be noisy—He sitteth alone and keeps silence—The stricken deer leaves the

herd. Other warriors appeal to the senses, and get fame: but his conflicts are carried on within, visible to God only; and his laurels are all future. Others may give alms, to be seen of men: but his left hand is not to know what his right hand doeth.

They are sometimes hidden by persecution. For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such; especially by secluding them from their social and public assemblies. This is not our case. Our teachers are not put into a corner. We can go to the House of God in company. We can feed in the ways; and our pasture is in all high places. But call to remembrance the former times, when they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth; or were confined in prisons; or prayed and preached under the cover of night—But they were dear to God; they were *his* hidden ones.

— They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble, are called: but when they *are* called, they are also *exhibited.* They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God hath chosen the poor of this world; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known! How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart; but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord, are living in cottages and hovels; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure.

— They are sometimes hidden by their disposition. They are reserved; and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self-diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially

as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian Church. Joseph, of Arimathæa, was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them; and so they did at last: but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way; and we must be patient towards all men.

— They are sometimes hidden by their infirmities. We would not plead for sin; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them; but not what is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report.

— The same also will apply to errors. Here, again, we are far from undervaluing Divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. How little did Peter know of the most important of all subjects, when our Saviour pronounced him blessed; and said he was a partaker of Divine illumination! We extend this even to congregations and communities. There may be individuals in them, wiser than their teachers; and no strangers to communion with the God of all grace. Who can entertain too bad an opinion of Popery? Yet we find a Nicol, a Pascal, a Fenelon, in that most corrupt church— Where may not God have his hidden ones? Let us not judge of the real number of his people, by things that do appear. It is not only candour, but truth, that tells us we may enlarge our hopes: while we ought to pray always—"The Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a hundredfold." "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how

he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."

Nov. 17.—"*His seed shall endure for ever.*"
Psalm lxxxix. 36.

David was peculiarly related to the Messiah. He wrote, as a poet and as a prophet, much concerning him. He yielded the most varied and complete type of him ever exhibited. He was at once his Lord and his Son—Hence the Name of the former is often applied to the latter; and what is spoken of the one, is often to be extended to the other—and *must* be so applied, to do any thing like justice to the force of the language. And in this cause we are more than justified, by numerous appropriations of men in the New Testament, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Upon this principle, the words before us insure the perpetuation of his people—"His seed shall continue for ever." We shall say nothing of their number; though, if we were asked the question, "Are there few that shall be saved?" we could boldly answer, No! Ignorance and bigotry have always diminished them; but they shall be found, when gathered together, a countless multitude.

But why are they called his *seed?* Because they derive their being, as new creatures, from him. "Every one that doeth righteousness, is born of Him."—In such a relation, we look for resemblance.

This, indeed, is not invariably the case, with regard to children. Some of them have little of the father's likeness, either in features or in temper. But all Christians resemble Christ. They bear the image of the Heavenly. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.—The relation infers duty. It does away, indeed, with all servileness; but not with service. "A seed shall serve him." "And I will spare them," says he, "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." "A son honoureth his father." Every Christian, therefore, will ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—The relation confers honour. His seed are descended from One who is higher than the kings of the earth; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and whose holiness and goodness are infinite—Such honour have all his saints.—But what a privilege does it bespeak! There is an amazing instinct in brute-creatures towards their young. It seems to transform the very nature of some of them. The timid sheep, and the fearful bird, become bold and daring on behalf of their young. As to man, if *he* were not to provide for his own, he would be contemned by all around him: and were he a pretender to religion, he would be considered as denying the faith, and be deemed worse than an Infidel. Will the Lord Jesus neglect *his* offspring? Will he suffer them to want any good thing? Will he not educate them? Chastise them? Resent every injury that is done them? Acknowledge them? Defend them?

But observe, not only their relation to him, but their perpetuity—"They shall continue for ever." They die, as well as others—they often die earlier. But, consistently with this obvious and undeniable fact, they shall continue for ever, in three senses. First. In the succession of their race to the end of the world. It will never be cut off—"The Church in danger!" *What* Church! "Upon this rock," says he, "I will build *my* Church; and the gates of hell

shall not prevail against it."—Yea, his people shall continue to increase in number and excellency—*We* shall leave the world better than we entered it: and so will our *children*—till Jerusalem shall be established, and be made a praise in the whole earth.—Secondly. In their religious character to the end of life. If left to themselves, we could not be sure of their persevering to the end of a day, or an hour. But they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He upholdeth them with his hand. They shall hold on their way. In all their dangers they shall be more than conquerors.—Thirdly. In their glorified state, through eternal ages. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever. All other greatness is only for life—frequently is not so long. But, at death, it *ends*. But *then*, the Christian's greatness—I will not say begins; for it began the moment he prayed—but then it continues—increases—and is perfected. Death only affects one part of him: the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness—and even the body shall be revived, and improved—and made like the Saviour's own glorious body—and be as immortal as the soul. Every thing here is variable, fading, perishing—

> "All, all on earth, is shadow; all beyond,
> "Is substance—the reverse, is Folly's creed—
> "How solid all, where change shall be no more!"

—Where we shall have, not only endless existence, but endless existence beatified. Where, if we have treasure, moth and rust will not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Where, if we have a house, it will not be a house made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. Where, if we have a crown of glory, it fadeth not away. Where, if we have friendships, we shall part no more. Where, we shall be for EVER WITH THE LORD.

Nov. 18.—"*Open thy mouth wide.*" Ps. lxxxi. 10.

THOUGH we cannot find out God, perfectly, in his essence or his works, we are not left in total ignorance concerning him. We have all the information our duty and our consolation can require. Though he be a God that hideth himself, yet he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. He has been pleased to reveal himself as the hearer of prayer—Yea more—as exciting it—as encouraging it—as concerned for the enlargement of our desires in the performance of it—"Open thy mouth wide."

This is no easy thing, with the consciousness we feel as sinners. To aid us herein, Let us consider his greatness and all-sufficiency. We should expect more from a prince than from a pauper. Many have benevolence without resources; and in vain we address them—they may grieve to deny us, but they cannot relieve. When the woman cried, "Help, O king!" he said, "Whence should I help thee?" But we kneel before One, whose greatness is unsearchable; who is Lord of all. His giving a world, would be less than our giving a crumb of bread. When Alexander had bestowed a very valuable present on a poor man, his modesty would have declined it: "It is too much," said he, "for *me* to receive"—"But," said the conqueror of the world, "it is not too much for me to give." God gives like himself; and he is to be addressed in character with himself. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. Is it comfort we want? He is the God of all comfort. Is it deliverance? Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Is it renovation? He can make all things new—He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

Let us consider his goodness. Nothing tends to contract us more than a sense of our unworthiness. We ought to feel this—but we ought not to be

discouraged by it; since he is the God of all grace, the Father of mercies; since he is rich in mercy, and delighteth in mercy. We are not to judge of Him by a human standard. It is an injury to us, when we are applying to him, to think of the benevolence of the most generous of our fellow-creatures—so far short do they come of his glory. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And the reference here, is to his thoughts and ways of mercy; and especially pardoning mercy.

Let us remember, also, the medium through which we implore his favours. We have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him: we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; having such an High Priest over the House of God, we draw near in full assurance of faith. In saving and glorifying us, through the Son of his love, we do not ask God to deny his truth; or dishonour his Name; or trample upon his law—Yea, he magnifies his law in doing it. He declares his righteousness. While he redeems Jacob, he glorifies himself in Israel: and glory to God in the highest, is combined with peace on earth, and good-will towards men. Let us think of this; and ask, and receive, that our joy may be full—Whatsoever, said he, ye shall ask the Father, in my Name, he will do it.

— Review, also, the manner in which he has answered the prayers of his people. Has he ever refused? Has he ever given sparingly? Jacob asked for bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and a return in peace to his father's house: and, lo! he becomes two bands! Solomon asked for a wise and understanding heart: and he obtained, not only wisdom, but life, and riches, and honour! Abraham left off asking, with regard to Sodom, before God left off giving. Why did he stop at ten? Had not God complied with every

preceding proposal, without the least reluctance? But Abraham was ashamed—he had not courage enough to go on.

— But is it not sufficient, that he has commanded it? Having His authority, you cannot be chargeable with presumption, if you ask much. Yea, if you do not—you will be guilty of rebellion. How did he punish the guests who refused the invitation to the feast, "Come, for all things are now ready!"

— Here is also an express assurance—a promise, not only that we shall receive, but be filled—Open thy mouth wide, and "I will *fill* it." He will supply *all* our need from his riches in glory—He will bless us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Where is the Christian who lives up to his duty? to his privilege? For God not only answers prayer really, but proportionably—He says, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Let not him, therefore, who prays rarely and coldly, think to succeed like the frequent and fervent petitioner. Honour God, and God will honour you. He does not despise the day of small things. But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Nov. 19.—"*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" John ix. 35.

This question was addressed to a man that had been blind. Some are blind by accident, and some, by disease; but this man was born blind—He had never seen even the face of her who bore him, and who, as she fed him at her breast, would often look upon him, and weep over her orbless boy. Blindness

is always a sufficient affliction in itself: but here, penury was added to it. Like others of the same class of sufferers, mentioned in the Gospels, he sat by the way-side, begging. Many had passed him, without notice: but Jesus had compassion on him. Some had given him alms—which was all he implored: but Jesus gave him eyes; and did for him beyond all that he could ask or think. The cure was notorious. The common people acknowledged it; and they brought the man to the Pharisees, supposing that *they* would be equally ready to confess it too. But see how the plainest truth can be perplexed or doubted, when it comes before those whose interest it is to deny or conceal it. First, they admit the fact; but turn it against our Saviour, because he had done it on the Sabbath-day. This did not satisfy the people, who justly remarked, that, had he violated the Sabbath hereby, he would have been a transgressor; and God would not have thus honoured a sinner. Then they pretend to question the fact itself. They set aside the man's own testimony, and call in his parents. His parents affirm, that he was their son, and that he had been born blind; but, fearing lest they should be put out of the synagogue, they affect to be ignorant of the mode of his cure! How stubborn is truth! How hard is it to suppress evidence! The attempt is like trying to keep fire under ashes out in the wind—it is much if some sparks do not escape. Again they call in the man himself; and, after an artless relation, which they could not resist; and an involuntary address, which they could not endure; "they cast him out" —that is, they drove him from their presence, and excommunicated him as a member of the Jewish synagogue. Informed of this, Jesus sought, and found him—and said unto him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

There are many foolish and useless questions asked by every individual. In the company of some

persons, we are in a perfect inquisition: we are tortured with inquiries concerning every body, and every thing. It would be well if many professors of religion were aware, that they are accountable, not only for their time, but their tongues; and would remember the language of our Saviour—"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Many of the inquiries in the theological world, which have engrossed so much attention, and injured so much temper, have turned on subjects too deep to be fathomed, or too trifling to merit regard. When Peter, wishing to know his designs concerning John, asked, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" he replied, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." A man, in the road, asked, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" But Jesus "answered and said unto *them*"—for he would not notice the trifler himself; but said unto *them* that were about him—"Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for I say unto you that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." If it be said, This was no answer to the question itself; we reply, that it *was* an answer; and the only *proper* answer—an answer, by way of *rebuke*—an answer, informing *them*, and informing *us*—That "the secret things belong unto God; but things that are revealed are for us, and for our children"—and, That whatever be the number of the saved, we may be included in it, if we earnestly and immediately seek it.

But the question before us is founded in importance. We may infer this, from the character of the enquirer: he never trifled, never spoke an idle word. And we may infer it, also, from the nature of the case itself. For what can be so important as faith in Christ? It is the principle of all religion. It is the only medium through which we can enjoy the blessings of the Gospel. Do we live? We "live by the faith of the Son of God." Do we walk? "We walk by faith." Do we stand? "By

faith we stand." Do we conquer? "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." There is no justification without it—"Being justified by faith." There is no sanctification without it—"Sanctified by faith that is in me." There is no consolation without it—"In whom, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In a word, there is no salvation without it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The same things, therefore, in the Scripture, which are ascribed to Christ, are also ascribed to faith. The reason is, because it is only by faith we can make use of Christ, for all the purposes which he is appointed to accomplish. It is only by faith we can receive him as the gift of God; enter him, as a refuge; apply him, as the balm of Gilead; and feed upon him, as the bread of life.

And unless we believe on him, we not only incur the greatest loss we can incur, but we contract the greatest guilt we can contract. We disobey the express command of God—his dearest command; the command which involves all his glory in the highest—For "this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." We make him a liar. We throw unspeakable contempt upon his wisdom and goodness. He has, at an infinite expense, provided a Saviour, and brought him near, and pressed us to avail ourselves of him. And how can we contemn God so much as by making light of it, and rejecting it? "He that believeth not shall be damned." "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

What, then, can be so momentous as this ques-

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And many never give it a serious thought. They live on, year after year, without ever once ring, "Am I a believer, or an unbeliever?"—h their everlasting all depends upon it—though is the accepted time, now is the day of salva--though their breath is in their nostrils—and know that their only opportunity is as uncertain s short. Oh! the deceitfulness of sin! Oh! the ess of sinners! Oh! the influence of the god is world, who blindeth the minds of them that e not!

ov. 20.—"*Did not I see thee in the garden him?*" John xviii. 26.

While within my garden roving,
And my senses all are fed;
Rising from these lov'd attractions,
I 'm to nobler subjects led:
Other gardens
Here, in musings, oft I tread.

First, I enter *Eden's* garden,
Yielding pain, and profit, too;
Adam, here, while sinless standing,
Nought of fear, or sorrow knew:
But what changes
Did from his offence ensue!

Then, with hope and joy reviving,
To *Gethsemane* I go;
And approach, in that dread garden,
Jesus bearing all my woe:
From his anguish
All my ease and safety flow.

In the Garden *where they laid him*,
With the Marys there I sit;
Weeping, till I see him rising,
And embrace his pierced feet:
King of Terrors,
Now I can thy frownings meet!

In the *Church*, the *Saviour's* garden—
Trees, and plants, and flowers, I see;
Guarded, water'd, train'd, and cherish'd,
Blooming immortality:
All, O Calvary!
All deriv'd *alone* from thee.

But, above all gardens precious,
See *the Heavenly Paradise:*
There the Tree of Life is bearing;
There the springs of glory rise:
And the richness
Every want and wish supplies.

There, the foot no thorn e'er pierces;
There, the heart ne'er heaves a sigh;
There, in white, we walk with Jesus;
All our lov'd connexions by:
And, to reach it,
'Tis a privilege to die!

Nov. 21.—"*Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father! my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!*" 2 Kings xiii. 14.

ELIJAH was spared the common doom of mortality, and was taken to heaven, in a chariot and horses of fire, without dying. But Elisha, who had honoured God so much longer, goes the way of all the earth. Why was this difference? Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

But he does not die of natural infirmity. Neither does he die suddenly—He had fallen sick. This mode of dissolution was less desirable, with regard to comfort; but it was more favourable to usefulness. It afforded him opportunity for glorifying God, and

instructing and impressing his attendants. And "the chamber where the good man meets his fate," has often been to others, as well as to the dying individual himself, the house of God, and the gate of heaven. We are therefore glad to find Joash the king of Israel with Elisha in this situation. Such a scene is generally very uninviting to persons in the upper ranks of life. They love not, in the midst of flattery and dissipation, to be reminded of the days of darkness. Yet "it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning: but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,"—more serious, and more soft.

But who was this Joash? "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein." Who would have looked for such a man here? Yet see the trouble he takes. He does not send to enquire after the dying prophet, but personally visits him. See his condescension and humility, in entering "a little chamber on the wall, with a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick." See his tenderness, in hanging over the expiring saint, and weeping. See his knowledge of the value and importance of Elisha—"Ah! what shall I do, and what will my people do, when thou art gone?—My father! my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" How much like a pious man does Joash now appear! How little can we judge of men by particular conditions, events, and feelings! Who has not had powerful convictions? Who has not often exclaimed, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his? Who has not, like Felix,

trembled, under the preaching of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? Of whom has it not, in some period, been said, as it was of the young man in the Gospel, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God?

— What brings Joash here now? He had disregarded and despised Elisha before. But Elisha is now *going*. "How mercies brighten, as they take their flight!" How an undutiful child prizes a parent, when he is following him to the grave! How many would listen to the voice of the preacher, when they can hear him no more! Even the Jews, who so often would have stoned Moses, mourned for him many days—and sincerely, too. Who would have thought that all these fine impressions would have worn off? But Joash leaves the dying room, and the honoured prophet, and enters ordinary life, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was—enters the tempting scenes of greatness; and his iniquities, like the wind, take him away! And who would have thought, that, after the wreck of all his worldly substance; or the loss of Joseph and Benjamin; or the taking away of the wife of his bosom with a stroke; or the awfulness of a disease that led him down to the gates of death, and induced him to cry, Oh! spare me a little longer! —who would have imagined, that, after such lessons—any man could turn again to folly, and walk more eagerly according to the course of this world! "O Ephraim!" says God, "what shall I do unto thee? O Judah! what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

The devotion of natural men depends upon external excitements. They pour out a prayer when God's chastening hand is upon them: but they do not delight themselves in the Almighty—they do not always call upon God. The summer-brook may,

y a storm, be swelled into a flood; but, having no ermanent source, it soon rolls off, and the bed is ry. A Christian's devotion may be aided by out- ard helps; but it does not depend upon them. His ractice flows from principle: and he exemplifies the romise—"The water that I will give him, shall be n him a well of water, springing up into everlasting fe." And "he only that endureth to the end, the ame shall be saved."

Nov. 22.—"*And the man of God was wroth with im, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six imes, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst nsumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but hrice.*" 2 Kings xiii. 19.

ELISHA was now on his dying bed; and being visited y Joash, the king of Israel, who was deeply affected ith the interview; he gave him two orders, the ne to shoot, and the other to smite—Both these ere doubtless delivered under a prophetical impulse; nd though they may seem strange to us, they were ell understood by the parties.

— "And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and rows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. nd he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand pon the bow. And he put his hand upon it; and lisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And e said, Open the window eastward. And he opened . Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And e said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and ne arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt

smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them." The Romans were accustomed to declare war against an enemy by shooting an arrow into their territory. Alexander also did this when he entered Persia. This order, therefore, was an intimation of war. Accordingly, it was discharged "eastward;" that is, towards Syria. But the man of God arose and stood behind him, while he held the bow—and put his left hand upon the king's left hand, and his right hand upon the king's right hand. For what purpose? Elisha was the representative of God, in whose name he now spake; and he thus teaches the king—that though he should use means, he should not depend upon them—that the excellency of the power was not of the weapons, but of God—and that, if his bow abode in strength, the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. It is therefore called the arrow of the *Lord*'s deliverance; and by which the Syrians were to be vanquished in Aphek.

And is it not so with us? When we work, God must work with us. If his hand be not with us for good; what is our prudence, our resolution, our energy? "Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Thus the apostles went forth, preaching; and the "hand of the Lord was with them; and many believed and turned unto the Lord."

Again, he said, "Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times—then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." Joash was conscious that the action was a sign, or he could not have been blameable. The action, therefore, betrayed remissness, and lukewarm

ness; it was expressive of his disposition; and it indicated the event. He therefore shewed that he was not willing to push the war to a complete issue; he was only for injuring and enfeebling the enemy he *might*, and *ought* to have *destroyed*. And so the Prophet viewed it. He saw that he was half-hearted, and would not improve his advantages. He should have resembled David, who could say, "I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets." But Joash was more disposed to imitate Ahab, who, when Benhadad was delivered into his hand, suffered him to escape, and to recover his power and means of annoying again—in consequence of which, God said, "Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

Elisha, therefore, was offended with Joash. And was it not enough in such a case to grieve a man of God, burning with holy zeal for his cause? And is it not grievous to God's ministers now, when *we* are not strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus? We have his promises and invitations; and we have the experience of his people, living and dying—all shewing us how willing he is to help; and to make us more than conquerors. But, alas! we are satisfied with *little*—not in temporal things—where contentment is a virtue; but in spiritual things—where moderation is a crime.

Say not, Why, O why, did not Joash continue smiting, till the Prophet said—"Enough." Are not you chargeable with the very same offence? Are not you satisfied with slightly wounding your spiritual enemies, instead of breathing after an entire victory over them? Are not you disposed to live

on a little corner of your estate, when there remains yet very much land to be possessed?

— Look at your desires! Are they not formal and few? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do your souls break for the longings they have unto God's judgments at all times? Do you open your mouth wide, that God may fill it? Do you pray, that, according to the riches of his glory, he would strengthen you with might by his Spirit in the inner man? that you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge? that you may be filled with all the fulness of God?

— Look at your expectations! Are they not few and faint? Is your hope a lively hope? Is it vigorous enough to counteract the impressions of the world? Do you abound in hope? Does it bear any proportion to the exceeding great and precious promises?

— Look at your exertions! Are they not few and languid? An occasional retirement—a hasty performance of private devotion—a formal service at the family altar—a forgetful hearing of the Word —without early rising—without self-denial—without taking up your cross—without *labouring* for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life—without *striving* to enter in at the straight gate—without *fighting* the good fight of faith—and taking the kingdom of heaven by force—O this vile moderation! This guilty relaxation! This smiting thrice only, instead of going forward, and deeming nothing done while any thing remains to do!

Wherefore, "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus

Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Nov. 23.—"*And Elisha died. And they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.*"
2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.

Here we see the Moabites did not come in a large army, but in particular bands, to pillage and alarm. It shews us in how undefended a state, at this period, the country must have been. But what has this to do with the death and burial of Elisha? The one is mentioned in connexion with the other; and has a reference to the exclamation the king made in his dying chamber, "O my father! my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." And see, would the historian say; see how soon this began to be exemplified! Does this cause seem inadequate to the effect? Who has not observed the importance of individuality? When Goliath came forward challenging, all the army of Israel fled. What a terror was Samson to the Philistines! They could do nothing till they had got rid of him. There are persons who are the life, the soul of a party or a

community. What enterprizes, for the glory of God, and the spread of the Gospel, have originated from one Christian! The death of a minister has been the signal for the division and dispersion of a congregation raised by his talents and zeal—"I know," says Paul, "that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

What is there peculiar here? The intimation of the historian is constantly and variously held forth in the Scripture at large. There we see the regard God pays to his people. "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."

"Oft have our fathers told,
"Our eyes have often seen,
"How well our God secures the fold,
"Where his own sheep have been."

The ungrateful world despises them. Yet how much do even *they* owe to the presence and the prayers of the saints! By them, blessings have been obtained or continued. They have withholden or removed judgments. They have been the "healers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in." Shall not we love them? and pray for their increase?

But here was a thing very acccidental, as to the persons employed. They were a funeral party, and were going to carry the corpse further; but, seeing a number of their invaders, and wishing to make a timely escape, they hastily laid it in the grave of Elisha, which happened to be at hand. But how wonderful was the result! "When the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet!" Here the Papists come (and to what other place can they come so well?), to find something to favour the doctrine of

relics. Which of their churches is not furnished with the supposed remains of saints?—Some of these saints, too, were little better than dæmons. But, allowing them to have been real saints—what profit is there in their bones when they go down to the grave? The virtue, here, was not in the bones of Elisha, but in the power of God. And what a stupendous miracle was it! "Surely, had not the people been blind and impenitent, they must have been brought to repentance." So we think—but who said, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead?" Whether there were, as yet, any Sadducees in Israel, we know not. If there were, they here saw a proof and an instance that the dead can be reanimated—and it matters not, as to the miracle of the fact, whether it took place two days after death, or two thousand years. God alone could have done it. And why should it be thought a thing incredible, that *God* should raise the dead? *His* power is almighty: and we see what changes and revivals it is continually producing in nature. But, with us, the subject admits of no doubt—We believe (the Lord prepare us for it!) that "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

The fathers—where are they? and the prophets—do they live for ever? No. The dearest, the greatest, the most useful, of his servants, die. But, "precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints." We are losers; but to them, to die is gain. They are privileged in it. They are privileged by it.—And it is desirable to be near them, living, dying, and dead; in time; and in eternity. "Gather not my soul with sinners." I would "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew; saying, I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you"—"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people,

and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

God can honour his servants, not only before they are in their graves, but after they are in them. The memory of the just is blessed—and useful, too. Yes; you may be the means of awakening and enlivening persons after your death—not by quickening their mortal bodies; but their souls, which were dead in trespasses and sins: not by your bones; but by your example, which shall still operate; by your instructions, which shall still speak—by the prayers you offered; by the books you gave; by the minister you educated; by the place of worship you built, while you were yet living.

— Every thing should lead us to the Saviour. How much any of the Jews, at this time, knew of the Messiah, we cannot ascertain. But *we* know, that because he died, we shall live—we know, that if we are planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. He made the grave his own, by residence and consecration—Behold the place where the Lord lay! Into this grave, we must descend—but we shall arise from it, not only living, but immortal: not, like this man, to die again, but to die no more; death having no more dominion over us. "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they rise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Nov. 24.—"*The righteous shall flourish.*" Ps. xcii. 12.

PROSPERITY in the divine life is the Christian's duty —and therefore he is commanded to grow in grace,

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. It is his desire—and hence he prays, Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. It is his privilege—and thus it is provided for, and secured by Divine promise—"The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Thus David here tells us, that "the righteous shall flourish." And he tells us—

How he shall flourish—"He shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Of the wicked he had said just before, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast—with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny of grass, in a warm country too—are the palm tree, and the cedar in Lebanon! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely they grow! How strong and lofty is the cedar! How upright, and majestic, and tall, the palm tree—The palm also bears fruit—dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundred weight at once.

He tells us *where* he shall flourish—"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine well-watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility, of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." They that wait upon the Lord renew their strength. Hence, from their own experience, as well

from the word of promise, they are increasingly induced to say, with David—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

He also tells us *when* he shall flourish—"They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is to shew the permanency of their principles—and to distinguish them from natural productions—

"The plants of grace shall ever live;
"Nature decays, but grace must thrive:
"Time, that doth all things else impair,
"Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The believer does not escape all the effects of years. The eye may grow dim; the ear become dull of hearing. But as the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day. The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring: the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see—more meekness of wisdom—more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace—more maturity of judgment in divine things—more confidence in God—more richness of experience.

He also tells us *why* he shall flourish—"They shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright." We might rather have supposed, that it was necessary to shew that *they* were upright. But, by the grace of God they are what they are—not they, but the grace of God which is in them. From *him* is their fruit found. Their preservation and fertility, therefore, are to the praise and glory of God: and as what he does for them, he had *engaged* to do; it displays his truth, as well as his mercy; and proves that he is upright. This cleaving also to him with purpose of heart, and not turning away from him, whatever temptations the world pre-

sents—shews that they have found him to be, what he had given himself out to be, and what they had taken him to be. Had he deceived or disappointed them, they would have forsaken him. But he has always dealt well with them—he has surpassed their hopes. They therefore love their Master and his work—and are willing to follow him to prison or to death—to show that he is upright.

David, therefore, attests this from his own experience—"Let every one speak as he finds. I cannot but magnify his Name. I cannot but recommend him to those who want a dependence that will not give way. I have tried him, and tried him much, and long. I never served him for nought. I never called upon him in vain. I never trusted in him, and was confounded—HE IS MY ROCK; AND THERE IS NO UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN HIM."

Nov. 25.—"*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" John ix. 35.

THE question concerns us, as well as the man who had been restored to sight. And it admits of solution. Indeed, the inquiry would be absurd, if an answer were impossible. Some very mistaken notions are entertained of Divine influence. One thing is undeniable. The grace of God, in renewing us, engages and employs us; so that we are not like wood and stone, under the operation of the saw and the chisel, merely passive, insensible, unconscious. God does not work upon us, but in us; and in us, to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure. He is the author of repentance, by enabling *us* to exercise repentance—And cannot a man know whether he repents of any course or action in which he has been engaged? He is the giver of faith, as he

teaches and aids *us* to believe. This faith, therefore, does not act in us like a charm. It is not a mysterious, unintelligible thing, of which we can give no account—We are always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us.

How then is an answer to be returned? Let us away with accidental occurrences, and dreams, and sudden impulses; and repair to the Scriptures at once; and, by their decisions, examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and prove our ownselves. Three evidences may be adduced of our believing on the Son of God. First. Much anxiousness and uneasiness concerning it; in distinction from the temper of those who can readily and easily take it for granted. This is not the disposition of awakened souls. *They* find how hard it is to abound and rejoice in hope. This results from the importance and dearness of the object. It is not true, as it is often said, that it is easy to believe what we wish—Yea, in proportion as we love and value a thing, we become the more apprehensive, and require every kind of proof and assurance concerning its safety. And here the case is interesting beyond all comparison—It is to ascertain my claims to everlasting life! What, if I should be mistaken! And my heart is deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked! And I learn, from the Word of Truth, that many are imposed upon to their remediless ruin! And what, if I am informed, but not enlightened!—convinced, but not converted!—almost, but not altogether a Christian!—No wonder, in such a case, solicitudes often revive; and the prayer be daily made—"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Let me not be ashamed of my hope. These doubts and fears are a token for good; and may be compared to smoke; which indeed is not fire, but proves its existence; and is never found where it is not.

Secondly. The estimation in which we hold the Saviour. Hence, says the Apostle, "To you there-

fore that believe, he is precious." He does not say how precious—this would have been impossible. But faith makes him more precious to the soul, than sight is to the eye; or melody, to the ear; or food, to the hungry; or health and life, to the sick and the dying. Oh! says the believer, when I see him, as he is revealed in the Word—when I see him in all I want—when I see how he becomes my Saviour—that, when he was rich, for my sake he became poor; and died, that I might live—when I know that he is remembering me still, now he is come into his kingdom; appearing in the presence of God for me; and making all things to work together for my good—how can I but exclaim, Thou art fairer than the children of men!—His Name must be as ointment poured forth—His cause must lie near my heart—I must dedicate myself to his service. I must hourly ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

"My God! and can a humble child,
"That loves Thee with a flame so high,
"Be ever from Thy face exil'd,
"Without the pity of thine eye?

"Impossible!—for thy own hands
"Have tied my heart so fast to thee—
"And, in thy Book, the promise stands—
"That where Thou art, thy friends must be."

Thirdly. A life of obedience. Without this, an orthodox creed; clear knowledge; high confidence; much talking of Divine things; great zeal for a party: will all in vain be called in to denominate you believers in Christ. Nothing can be more certain, than that as a man is not wise who calls himself so, while all his conduct proclaims him a fool; and as *he* is not a benefactor who never gives—unless, indeed, words: so *he* is not a believer who thinks and professes himself to be such; but he who acts and lives as such. We read of the work of faith—Where is *this?* By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abraham

left his own country, and his father's house. Read the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and see whether faith is a mere notion, or a vital principle. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can such faith save him?" Therefore, says James, "Shew me thy faith without thy works"—shew me a sun that never shines; a fire that never burns; a fountain that never flows—"and I will shew thee my faith by my works"—I will shew thee the spring in the streams; the cause, in the effects; the principle, in the practice. Though faith can alone justify the soul; works can alone justify faith, and prove it to be of the operation of God.

Nov. 26.—"*My people—have forgotten their resting-place.*" Jer. l. 6.

God has provided every creature he has made with some convenient good, in the possession of which it reposes. Natural bodies have their proper places, towards which they are carried, and declare, by resting in them, that they are where they ought to be. Sensitive beings are led towards sensitive, and animal beings towards animal indulgence, as agreeable to their nature; and they look no farther. But God himself is the resting-place of man: and it has justly been remarked, that herein lies man's excellency; that he alone, of all creatures in this lower world, was made capable of communion with his Maker; and designed for it—and being designed for it, and made capable of it, he is necessarily unsatisfied and restless without it. For though he has been turned away from God by sin, he retains the same natural relation

to God as his end; so that he can enjoy no true repose, till he meets with God again. He feels not only sentiments of misery, but of grandeur; and whatever may be employed to quiet and content him, will be found perfectly inadequate: and from every fruitless experiment to supply the immense cravings of a fallen, yet immortal mind, he will ever be asking, "Who will shew us any good?"

There was a time when the "people of God" themselves attempted to live without him in the world. But they were dead while they lived. They were strangers to every thing like satisfaction, till they happily enquired, "Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" But since they sought and found him, they have been able to make their boast in the Lord—"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." *He*, therefore, is "*their* resting-place" actually; and by conviction; and choice; and enjoyment, And what a resting-place is He! There is no repose like that which we possess in Him—It is a peace that passeth all understanding. How then can it be described! Who can express the blessedness of viewing him as our own God, in the covenant of his dear Son—ready to pardon—able to enlighten, to renew, to support, to defend—presiding over all our affairs, and making the most adverse events conduce to our welfare—and promising, on oath, that his grace shall be sufficient for us; and that he will supply all our need from his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus! All we can do is to invite others to come, and learn (it is the only way to know) by experience—"O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Incomparable as this resting-place

is, it is equally secure and durable. Nothing can destroy it; nothing can injure it; nothing can invade it. We live in the midst of uncertainty and change; but the Lord changes not. There is therefore something sure; something lasting—It is that very one thing, O Christian! upon which thou hast laid all thy hope; and from which thou drawest all thy comfort—The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms.

— And yet they are charged with *forgetting* their resting-place. The charge cannot be taken without limitation. As fainting is not death; and as backsliding is not apostacy; so this forgetfulness is not constant and total. But, alas! it cannot be denied, that it is occasional and partial.—Our ingratitude shows it. This is at once the effect and the proof of our forgetfulness of God; and is therefore expressed by it—"Thou hast forgotten the God that formed thee."

It sometimes appears with regard to the means of grace. In proportion as we feel our need of *Him*, we shall value *them;* because it is in these that God is to be found and enjoyed—Hence it is said, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." But we may read the Scriptures less than we did—and be less alone—and less regardful of the Sabbath—and suffer excuses to keep us from the sanctuary that once would have had no influence over us.

It shews itself in our looking to ourselves for what we want; when in the Lord we have righteousness and strength; and from him is our fruit found.

We betray it in our creature dependence. Instead of committing our way unto the Lord, and waiting patiently for him, we weary ourselves for very vanity, in running from creature to creature for help; and learn, by our folly and suffering, that our strength is to sit still: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved;

in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."—And do we not forget Him when we faint in the day of adversity? "Oh!" says one, "if such a comfort was removed, mine eye would no more see good." "Oh!" says another, "my loss is irreparable; my wound is incurable." We do not wish you to be insensible, or to undervalue your deprivations: but is it a lamp, or the sun, of which you have been deprived? David, in the desolations of Ziklag, did not forget his resting-place—"Then David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

Our regard to the world, will also shew our regard to God. We forget him, just in proportion as the world strikes and allures us—In sight of Him, it can do nothing with us. But where is the spring, when we stoop to the puddle? Are not the consolations of God small with us, when we repair to worldly attractions and delights?—But the charge is too obvious to require proof—and every Christian will readily confess,

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
"Prone to leave the God I love."

But how humiliating is the fact! And how wonderful, too! "Can a maid forget her ornaments? or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number," "who am their beauty, their glory; all their salvation and all their desire." How little would they themselves have supposed this possible, when they first returned to him, from darkness to light; from bondage to liberty; from a wilderness to the Garden of the Lord! "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." And still, after renewed manifestations, and under lively impressions, they are often

ready to think they can never be the same dull and ungrateful creatures they have often been—

"When my forgetful soul renews
"The savour of thy grace,
"My heart presumes, I cannot lose
"The relish all my days.

"But, ere one fleeting hour is past,
"The flattering world employs
"Some sensual bait to seize my taste,
"And to pollute my joys.

"Wretch that I am, to wander thus,
"In chace of false delight!
"Let me be fasten'd to thy cross,
"Rather than lose the sight!

"Make haste, my days, to reach the goal,
"And bring my soul to rest
"On the dear centre of my soul—
"My God, my Saviour's breast."

Nov. 27.—"*Faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*" 1 Tim. i. 14.

These two are often spoken of in the Scriptures. And, if we observe the passages in which they occur; and especially the words of the Apostle John —"This is his commandment, that we believe on the Name of his Son—and love one another;" we shall see, that the first regards Christ, and the second, our brethren.

But let us remark their order. Faith is placed before love—and this is the case without any exception, whenever they are coupled together by the Sacred Writers. And there is reason for it. The order of the words is the order of the things. Faith precedes all true obedience. It necessarily goes be-

fore repentance—I cannot grieve for what I have done amiss, unless I believe I have done wrong: and I cannot sorrow after a godly sort, unless I look on him whom I have pierced, and mourn for *him*. Faith is a radical principle. It is the root of the tree; and all the rest is branch, blossom, and fruit. It is the spring, from which every thing else in religion flows, as a stream. Love does not produce faith; but faith, love.

Yet there is a connexion between them; and their union is also as invariably expressed as their order. In truth, they are inseparable. Is it conceivable, that when such a scheme as Christianity gets into the soul, it can lie there dead, or even asleep? Is it not compared to a well of water, springing up into everlasting life? to a fire, that converts every thing combustible into its own nature? to leaven hid in meal, that leavens the whole lump? Observe all the believers, who, in the Scripture, encompass us as a great cloud of witnesses. Was their faith a notion? a profession? a form of godliness without the power? Could *such* faith have saved them? True faith overcomes the world. It purifies the heart. And it works by love—not exclusively indeed. It works by hatred, when it regards sin; and by fear, when it regards danger—So Noah, by faith, being warned of God, was moved with fear. But love is the disposition the Gospel peculiarly requires. It is the end of the commandment, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. It also is pre-eminently suited to produce it. What is God? God is love. From what principle did he act in our salvation? God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. What do we see in the life and death of the Saviour, but Divine compassion embodied? a love that passeth knowledge?

And what is the inference? "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour."

Let us not pass over this. Some people's faith seems to work by selfishness, censoriousness, wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness. But we have no reason to conclude that we have "the faith of God's elect," unless, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, we put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

It is lamentable to think, how many of our fellow-creatures are destitute of these graces. Art thou, O my soul! a stranger to the influence of this faith and love? Let me remember, that they are infinitely important and indispensable—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

But shall I be satisfied with the reality of this faith and love, regardless of the degree? How desirable—how necessary, how attainable, is more of their vital prevalency! Let me resemble the Thessalonians; of whom the Apostle could say, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

Nov. 28.—"*Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*" Prov. xxiii. 17.

The mistake of many persons is, that they view religion as something separate from common life; and which can hardly be made to agree with it. But we are to render every thing, not only consistent with godliness, but even a part of it. If Gaius was to bring friends on their way, it was to be done so as to render it, not only an act of civility, but of piety—It was to be done "after a godly sort." "On Thee," says David, "do I wait all the day." And Solomon enjoins us to be "in the fear of the Lord all the day long." The day, here, is to be taken, not abstractedly, as a mere period of duration; but in reference to its concerns. There are several things, into contact with which we may expect to come every day. Let us see how the fear of the Lord will influence us, with regard to each of them.

First. It will influence us as to the devotions of the day. If there be an opportunity of repairing to the House of God, and hearing his word, it will dispose us to avail ourselves of it; and so to regulate our affairs as to be able to attend. It will produce morning and evening worship at the family altar. It will also lead us to enter our closets. The principle also, will not only excite us *to* the performance of devotion, but aid us *in* it—throwing off mere formality, or causing us to mourn over our want of spirituality and life.

Secondly. It will influence us as to the business of the day. It will require us to have some profession or calling in which we are to be employed; and in this it will induce us to be diligent. An idle man cannot be under the power of religion; and lies open to temptation. It will also make us conscientious; governing ourselves by the fair rules of trade; not having divers weights and measures; or different kinds of goods and prices, for friends and

strangers, the knowing or the ignorant. It will allow us to aim at lawful advantage: but it will regulate and moderate our desire of gain. It will make us content with subsistence and competency, without wealth and independence—"He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent." It will make us feel our reliance upon God for his blessing, without which we may rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows. Upon the same principle, it will make us grateful for success; and keep us from burning incense to our own net, and sacrificing to our own drag.

Thirdly. It will influence us as to the relaxations of the day. These we need. Who could bear unceasing, unbending drudgery? The machine would soon be worn out by perpetual friction. All indulgences are not innocent. We shall therefore avoid those that would stain the mind, and wound the conscience and unfit us for prayer. We shall shun expensive entertainments—The most agreeable and useful recreations are the cheapest—And who can ever be at a loss for these, if they will follow nature, instead of fashion? And we shall indulge in none to excess, as to time—of time we must always be frugal. Like the swallow, we must skim the water as we fly; or, like Gideon's followers, we must, in our pursuit, lap with the hand, rather than kneel down. The fear of the Lord will make us always watchful, with regard to *indulgence*—and *especially* in things lawful; for here we are most liable to be ensnared. God giveth us richly all things to enjoy: but we are not to feast ourselves without fear.

Fourthly. It will influence us as to the company of the day. Are we called to intermix with the wicked? We shall walk in wisdom towards them that are without. We shall endeavour to render our religion, not only impressive, but attractive. We shall keep our mouth as with a bridle; or, if we speak, it will be a

word in season. Do we meet with pious connexio
We shall feel towards them as brethren. We s
speak of the things touching the King. We shall
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our immediate relations, and in our family circle,
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we shall expect to succeed, not so much by direct eff
as by keeping our charge constantly under the exh
tion of whatsoever things are lovely and of good rep

Finally. It will influence us as to the trials of
day. It will not fill us with forebodings, and prev
our enjoying the present comforts of Providence;
it will keep us from forgetting that this is a val
tears, or thinking it strange if we are called
endure. It will teach us to look beyond instrume
—to see and own the hand of God in our afl
tions—to inquire wherefore he contendeth with
—to implore grace, not only to support, but to sa
tify; and to enable us to honour God, and ec
others, by our sufferings—and, avoiding all impro
means to escape from trouble, not only hope,
quietly wait, for the salvation of God.

A concern to exemplify all this, is the best
dence of our religion. It is the way of safety,
honour, and advantage. The eye of God is upon
all the day long. He is doing us good all the
long. We may die all the day long—Let us th
fore be in the fear of the Lord all day long.

Nov. 29.—"*This is his commandment, That
should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Chr
and love one another, as he gave us commandmen*
1 John iii.

The *injunction* of the latter of these, has given rise to no difficulty. But much dispute has been occasioned by the *commanding* of the former. It is undeniable, however, that the one is enjoined as well as the other—in the same passage, and—by the very same authority. He that commands us to love one another, commands us equally to believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.

And if so, then faith is a duty. Indeed, if it be not a duty, we are not bound to obey God. If it be not a duty, unbelief is not a sin. Yet the Holy Ghost convinces us of sin—and of sin, because we believe not on Christ. Accordingly, in conviction, with the discovery of *this* guilt, we are principally affected; and look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him. Hence, unbelief is punishable, and destroys the soul. Indeed, nothing else destroys the soul, under the Gospel. For provision is there made for our fallen condition, and pressed upon our acceptance—but we neglect so great salvation; and turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.—It is true, Divine influence is necessary. But why is it not possessed? *It is sinful to be without it*—if there be any truth in the Bible. But why should we seek after, or be thankful for, assistance, to enable us to do what *we were under no obligation to do?*

This justifies ministers, in calling upon sinners to believe. There are some who condemn and ridicule them for this. But Ezekiel, in the Name of God, prophesied to the dry bones, and said unto *them*—"Live." Paul made no scruple to admonish Simon Magus, though in the gall of bitterness and the bond of inquity, to repent and pray. And to the Jailor he said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt* be saved—for he *then* was not.

As the love of God renders our duty our privilege; so the authority of God renders our privilege our duty. And is not this an advantage? For thus we are not left to the calls of self-love, and our own

interest; but are bound to pursue our welfare by the command of God, and the peril arising from a neglect of it.

This also meets the state of the conscience, and affords encouragement to awakened sinners. These, under a sense of their unworthiness and guilt, will be sure to ask—"But *may* I go to him, and trust in him? What *warrant* have I?" Now here is the warrant—the command of God. I may doubt my title to a promise; but I cannot question my obligation to obey a Divine command. This fully authorizes me—Yea, it not only secures me from presumption if I comply, but renders me chargeable with disobedience if I refuse. I am not afraid to love another—I never enquire, *may* I do it—I know that I *ought* to do it; because he has commanded it—Why then should I fear to apply to the Saviour?—And why ask, *May* I believe on him to life everlasting?—since this also is his commandment, That we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ?

Lord, I believe—help thou mine unbelief.

Nov. 30.—"*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" John ix. 35.

WHOEVER thou art that readest this page, allow the writer to address this question to THEE.

Art thou *young*—Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God? O that you did! How the Scripture extols and recommends early godliness! They that seek me early, says the Saviour, shall find me—find me—for there is an emphasis in the promise; find me, as others never will, never can, find me—find me, in a thousand peculiar preservations, honours, advantages, and delights. And what a favourable

season do you now enjoy!—the body in health and strength—the mind in vigour—the memory retentive—the affections warm—the heart tender—the cares and troubles of life scarcely begun—the days distant in which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them!" Oh! redeem the time. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Enter immediately a course that is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Art thou *old*—Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God? Thy age demands respect; and I readily pay it—but thy state! Ah! thy state demands all my fidelity. And art thou, at the end of sixty, seventy, eighty, years, ignorant of the Redeemer, whom to know is life eternal? Have all these departed seasons been passed only in vanity and vice? Is thy day rapidly closing; and thy work, thy journey, not even begun? Does thine eye, in looking back, meet with nothing but guilt; and, in looking forward, nothing but gloom? How I pity thy condition! It is time—it is high time—to awake out of sleep. And, blessed be God, it is not too late.

"And, while the lamp holds out to burn,
"The vilest sinner may return."

I announce a Saviour who is able to save unto the uttermost; and who converted and pardoned the Thief at the eleventh hour—Oh! seek him while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near.—But if thou art old in grace, as well as in age, thy hoary head, being found in the way of righteousness, is a crown of glory. And thy salvation nearer than when thou believedst. The night, with thee, is far spent, and the day is at hand. Yet a little while, and what a blessed deliverance—

"All thy sorrows left below,
"And earth exchang'd for heav'n!"

Till then, let faith and patience have their perfect work—Speak well of his Name—Recommend his service to others, from your own knowledge of its excellency—Take a fresh and firmer hold of him, from the proofs you have had of his faithfulness and care: and, leaning upon his arm, as you descend, say—

"By long experience, I have known
"Thy sov'reign power to save;
"At thy command, I venture down
"Securely to the grave."

Art thou *indulged* by Providence? Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God? Perhaps sickness led you down to the very gates of death; and ou looked into eternity; and, without hope in that world—you trembled, and cried, Take me not off in the midst of my days—Oh! spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more. And he heard your cry; and said, Return again, ye children of men. And have you returned again to folly? And have you forgotten that the vows of God are upon you? And what is a recovered body, while the soul is full of moral disease? A reprieve, too, is not a pardon. Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return—is the sentence still suspended; the delayed execution of which will be attended with added terror and remorse. Perhaps thy business flourishes; thy grounds bring forth plentifully; thy cup of prosperity runneth over. We do not wish you to despise the bounties of Nature and Providence; yea, you ought to be thankful for them—As to their *use*, they are valuable—but what are they as a *portion!* How melancholy is the thought that you must leave them! And you know not how soon you may be torn from all your treasure. And, even in the midst of your fulness, are you not in straits? Do you not sigh over your

very enjoyments? Does not success, as well as disappointment, tell you, that this is not your rest? Ah! these failures of hope, these inward uneasinesses, are the inspiration of the Almighty, to give you understanding. They are designed to turn you from creatures, which are all vanity and vexation of spirit, to a Saviour, who is full of grace and truth. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.

Art thou the subject of *affliction?* Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God? To be poor in the world, and be destitute of the true riches; to have no friend below, and no God above; to pass from the sorrows of time into a more miserable eternity—is a state so dreadful, that every feeling of benevolence must be concerned to find a resource for its victims. And such we can open. There is the hope of Israel—the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble. His Gospel is sent to bind up the broken-hearted. Perhaps you are at your wits' end—Perhaps ready to curse the day of your birth—Perhaps tempted to destroy yourself. Beware of the Devil's relief—that cure will be far worse than the disease. And you need it not. There is One near you whom you know not—O that you did! He is now stretching forth his soft hand; he is now saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian cometh into the land.

Art thou a *professor of religion?* Dost thou believe on the Son of God? "Why should you address the inquiry to me? Had not the Church been satisfied with my character; and deemed me a believer; they would not have admitted me to their communion." But they might have been mistaken. They could only judge from outward appearance: and it became them to be candid. There is no certainty from this quarter.—"But if I had not hoped that I was a real believer in Jesus, I should

not have proposed myself as a member of a Christian Church, and have come to the Lord's Table, where I should have eaten and drunken unworthily. Why, then, do you suspect me?" My friend—I do not suspect you; but I love you—and love, though not suspicious, is cautious. As mistakes are possible, and common; it cannot be improper for you to examine yourself, and prove whether you are in the faith. If the house be upon the sand, it is well to know it before the storm comes. But if it be built on the rock, the discovery will yield fresh satisfaction; and you will be encouraged to say—"I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

Or art thou a *real Christian?* Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God? "I know that thou believest." Yet, as pride blends with the humility of the most humble; and impatience, with the resignation of the most patient: even so, as an old writer says, what unbelieving believers are the best believers! When our Saviour had expressed himself more fully and clearly; his disciples exclaimed, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?"—You think so: but imagination is not reality—I know you better than you know yourselves—And you yourselves, in a little time, will see that you have much less faith than you now profess—"Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." All—all may cry out, with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

DECEMBER 1.—"*Doth Job fear God for nought?*" Job. i. ix.

THESE are the words of Satan. Some deny the agency, and even the existence of such a being. But the denial renders the language of the Scripture inexplicable, or absurd; and furnishes a proof of the fact itself: for the god of this world blindeth the minds of them that believe not.

These are the words of Satan—And let us not refuse to consider them, because *he* is the speaker. Truth is the same, whoever utters it.

"Seize upon truth, where'er tis found;
"Among your friends, among your foes:
"On Christian or on Heathen ground,
"The flower 's divine, where'er it grows.
"Refuse the prickles, and assume the rose."

Alluding to the Scribes, our Saviour said to his hearers, "Whatsoever they command you to observe, that observe ye: but do not after their works; for they say, and do not."

These are the words of Satan—But though we should not refuse the truth, because it comes from *him*; yet it surely becomes us to examine whether what he says *is* truth; and also for what *purpose* he says it. For even truth may be misapplied and abused. It is thus Antinomians are so injurious: by the most precious doctrines of the Gospel, they turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and make Christ the minister of sin. In our Lord's temptation, Satan had a Bible with him, and turned to the passages; or he shewed a good memory for the Scripture—for he quoted it very readily; but it was for the vilest design.

Now it is easy to learn his meaning here. God had been extolling his servant Job—"The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant *Job*, that there is none like him in the earth: a

perfect and an upright man; one that feare
and eschcweth evil?" Then Satan answered t
and said—"He is, I acknowledge, a worsh
Thee! And no wonder. He has found it t
to grandeur and wealth. It has procured
seven thousand sheep, and three thousand
and five hundred she asses, and a very grea
hold; so that he is the greatest man in tl
He has found godliness gain; and now mal
godliness—Doth Job serve God for nought?"

Here we see how well Satan is called, the
of the brethren. He accuses them to Go
as many of the articles are true, they wou
reason to fear; but they have One in court,
suit them—they have an Advocate with the
"Who is he that condemneth? It is Chr
died, yea rather, that is risen again, who
at the right hand of God, who also maket
cession for us." He accuses them before me
see, from the early defences of Christiani
much they were defamed. At their private
they devoured their own infants. At their
nal meetings, they committed every crime th
disgrace human nature. If there was a fi
famine, they caused the one and occasioned tl
In the Acts of the Apostles, we read, that C
were a sect every where spoken against.
still: and some of the brightest characters tl
adorned the Church and served their gener
modern times, have been blackened by every
of imputation.

See the malignant cunning of this adversa
goeth about seeking whom he may devour or
He can bring nothing against Job's condu
was undeniably fair and righteous: he t
insinuates a charge against his motive. A
none that follow his example? "He is so
He does so and so—and this would be ver
but it is to please his connexions—to aid

ness—and to gain a name. Ah! were it real—but it is all outside, all show, all pretence." Now nothing can be more *devilish* than this. There is a great difference between judging ourselves, and judging others. In the one case we cannot be too severe; in the other, we cannot be too candid—Yet the reverse of this commonly prevails. We should not judge ourselves only, or principally, by our actions; but by our motives, which enter so essentially into their morality. But we should judge others wholly by their conduct, and not by their motives—for these are cognizable only to God. It is his prerogative to search the heart. He will not condemn us for our ignorance of it. Charity thinketh no evil. It will always be far more honourable to be mistaken in any of our fellow-creatures, than to be suspicious of them.

Satan was right in the principle of his insinuation: viz. That there was little to admire in Job's excellency, had he been a mere mercenary wretch, who, in all he did, had no regard for God, but to his own advantage only. Such actors there have always been. Thus Laban pressed Jacob to continue with him, not from affection or respect; but because, says he, I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. In the same way the Shechemites reasoned: "Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us." Jehu said, "See my zeal for the Lord:" but it was to aggrandize himself and his family; and he was even punished for actions which fulfilled the will of God. Our Saviour did not commend those who followed him because they did eat of the loaves and fishes: and early applied a test which would evince a regard for *himself* in those that adhered to him—He that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple. And we always, in the conduct of our fellow-creatures, value a trifle

at is done from pure regard—while we despise the lendid service that aims at the performer's own lvantage.—Yet, though there was force in Satan's asoning—first, nothing could be more vile and false an his application of it to Job. And therefore God ermitted him to be tried, that his rectitude might e found unto praise, and glory, and honour. Satan aid, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that e hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Then ays God, Behold, all he *hath* is in thy power; only pon himself put not forth thine hand. But he bears ell the destruction of the whole.—Then said Satan, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give or his life. But put forth thine hand now, and ouch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse hee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." And e is now covered with sore boils, from the crown f his head to the sole of his foot. But in all this e sinneth not, nor charges God foolishly—and instead of cursing him to his face, he exclaims—"Blessd be the Name of the Lord!"

And, secondly, we must distinguish between unrincipled selfishness, and excitements to gratitude nd encouragement. The supreme reason, as well s the grand rule of obedience, is the will of God. And the language of the Christian is, Lord, what ilt thou have me to do? And the providence of od will often afford him opportunities to evince hat the Divine glory is better to him than his secuar advantage. But it cannot be wrong to think of he promises; and be animated in our difficulties y the view of what the Scripture has proposed to ur hope. Thus Moses is not censured for having espect unto the recompence of the reward. And esus, for the joy that was set before him, endured he cross and despised the shame.

And, thirdly, though we ought not to serve God or gain as the motive, we cannot serve God for

nought as to the result. He is a good master; and while his work is honourable and glorious, he deals well with his servants; and in keeping his commandments there is great reward. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

DEC. 2.—"*And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*" Matt. xv. 27,

To Him, said the dying Jacob, shall the gathering of the people be. To Him, said the evangelical Isaiah, shall men come. He is the centre of all attraction, because he is the only source of relief. To whom, in all our ignorance, should wo go, but to him who has the words of eternal life? To whom, in all our guilt and weakness; but to him in whom we have righteousness and strength? To whom, in all our dangers and misery; but to him who is the hope of Israel—the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble? And, blessed be his Name, he is not only mighty to save, but has been pleased to assure us—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

—But he may try the confidence—He has bound himself not to disappoint. We have here an application made to him by a woman of Canaan, who cried to him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But observe the discouragements she meets with—First, his silence—"He answered her not a word." Secondly, the address of his disciples. It is not certain that they pleaded for her relief at all: but if they did, it was in a spirit we cannot admire;

betraying impatience, and a wish to get rid of her importunity—"His disciples came and besought him, saying, Lord, send her away; for she crieth after us." Then here is, thirdly, a kind of exclusion, which seems to place her beyond the reach of his commission, if not his pity—"He said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." All this not driving her away; he, fourthly, speaks as if he would add insult to rejection—"Is a dog to be treated like one of the family?—It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs"—"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Let us consider this, as the language of a sinner, applying for mercy, in the prayer of faith.

First. He allows the truth of God's word, however it may reflect upon him—"Truth, Lord." He had, in effect, called the woman a dog; and nothing could have been more reproachful. We see this in the question of Hazael; and the offer of Abishai, with regard to Shimei—Among the Jews, too, a dog, was an animal unclean, and forbidden in sacrifice: and God's utmost abhorrence of a victim was expressed by cutting off a dog's neck—Yet she says, "Truth, Lord"—I acquiesce in the censure.—A sinner is called every thing that is vile in the Scripture—a fool; a madman; a rebel; a traitor—unworthy of the least of all God's mercies—and deserving that his wrath should come upon him—And, Lord, says he, it is all true. And thou art justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
"I must pronounce Thee just, in death;
"And should my soul be sent to hell,
"The righteous law approves it well."

Here, others stand out—but the convinced sinner is brought to add his amen, not only to the truth of God's word in general, but the truth of it with regard

to his own personal guilt, depravity, and condemnation. And till we are brought to this, the Gospel can have nothing to do with us. It is a remedy: but a remedy is for the sick, and not for the healthful. The way to attain relief and comfort, is not to deny, conceal, or extenuate our sins; but to confess them in all their heinousness; and, in dealing with God, to stand where his word places us.

Secondly. He draws encouragement from seeming repulse—"Yet, Lord." This is an exercise of spiritual understanding: but the absolute importance of the case makes the man alive to every opening of hope; and he is now under the influence of the Spirit, that is teaching him to be wise unto salvation. Thus, darkness is made light, and crooked things straight. Thus he rises above difficulties, which would otherwise be insuperable. He distinguishes between appearances and reality. "I know that, behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face." Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. If he wounds, it is to heal. I hope I am his, *because* I am thus. As long as he tries me, he is not saying, Let him alone. He would not thus prune the tree, if he had sentenced it to be cut down. I see what once I did not; and the discovery is painful—but if he was minded to kill me, he would not have shewed me such things as these. That be far from Him, to trifle with my misery. In vain the Enemy says, But thy sins are so numerous and aggravated—They are: but this is the very reason why I should apply for mercy—Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great—

> "*Yet*, save a trembling sinner, Lord,
> "Whose hope, still hov'ring round thy word,
> "Would light on some sweet promise there,
> "Some sure defence against despair."

Thirdly. He prizes the least communication from the Saviour—"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat

of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"—and this is all I crave. The very same sentiment is put into the mouth of the Prodigal—There is bread enough in my father's house, and I perish with hunger—he never thought of the fatted calf; or the best robe, or of the ring on his hand, or the shoes on his feet—Oh! let me return to thy dear abode, and I shall not covet the chief room, or the highest seat—Make me as one of thine hired servants. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ. David wished to be a door-keeper in the house of his God. The least grace is infinitely precious. It is connected with salvation; and makes us the heirs of promise. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Fourthly. He perceives the affluence and all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. Though what I implore is much for me to receive, it is nothing for thee to give. It is no more than a crumb from a king's table—What is this to the viands on the board, and the resources of his wealth!—What I implore, thou wilt not miss—and I shall not rob thy children of their portion and plenty.

—Come, therefore, to him, remembering that he is Lord of all; that he is not only rich, but that his riches are unsearchable; that he has not only fulfilled the law, but magnified it, and made it honourable—that his righteousness is the righteousness of God, by faith—that his blood cleanseth from all sin—that in him all fulness dwells.

—And he will give you, not a dog's place, and a dog's portion; but he will put you among the children. He will seat you at his own table. He will say, Eat, O friends, and drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. Was it not so here? Was he not charmed, instead of being displeased, with her earnest and continued application? Does he not commend her for not taking a denial; and for urging him, apparently, against his will?—"O woman! great

is thy faith"—not, great is thy humility, thy importunity, thy perseverance—these *were* great; but *faith* was the root of them all. This, therefore, was what he admired in her. And this is the one thing needful for us. This alone will keep us steady to our purpose; this alone will carry us through all our difficulties. But this insures our final success; and crowns us with praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. And he said unto her, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." So will he say to you. And you will be foolish indeed, if you do not avail yourselves of the largeness of the offer; and ask, and receive, that your joy may be full.

DEC. 3.—"*Behold, I am vile.*" Job xl. 4.

VILE, says Johnson's Dictionary, signifies mean, worthless, base, despicable, impure. There is nothing in the world to which this applies so well as to sin. And it is to sin the exclaimer here refers. He does not call himself "vile," because he was reduced, and poor. By this, no man of reflection would ever feel himself degraded. A horse is not valued for his trappings, but for his strength, or his speed. Character is a personal thing, and independent of outward circumstances. If poverty, as some fools seem to judge, made a man vile, how vile were the apostles, who could say, "We hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place!"—And how vile was He who had not where to lay his head!—Nor does he call himself "vile," because he was diseased, and full of sore boils from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. The Scripture, indeed, calls the body—"this vile body;" and it *is* truly humbling,

not only in the putrefaction of the grave, but frequently also, even in life. How low are some of its appetites! how mortifying some of its infirmities! while some of its diseases are so trying as to require all the force of friendship to discharge the common duties of humanity. But there are no "wounds, bruises, putrefying sores," to be compared with the effects of sin—nothing is so "vile" as this—This makes us abominable to God himself; and is the only thing that does so. And how loathsome must that be, that causes the Creator to abhor the work of his own hands; and the Father of mercies to punish it with everlasting destruction from his presence; and to refuse to pardon it without the sacrifice of his own Son!

But who makes this confession? Is it a profligate wretch, whose iniquity in its effects has been found to be hateful, even to himself? Is it a penitent, newly awakened, and looking into his own heart, that had been concealed from him before? No: but Job, a saint, and a saint of no ordinary magnitude. You have heard of the patience of Job; and know how he is mentioned by Ezekiel, along with Noah and Daniel, as one of three who were pre-eminently righteous; and how God, the Judge of all, calls him "a perfect and an upright man"—Yet this is he who cries, "Behold, I am vile!" And what do we learn from hence, but this—That the most gracious characters are the most remote from vain-glory; and are always more affected with their imperfections, than their excellencies? The nearer we approach completeness in any thing, the more easily we shall discern, and the more sensibly we shall feel our remaining deficiencies. A little learning puffeth up; but modesty and diffidence attend profound science. The advancing in knowledge is like sailing down a river, which widens as we proceed, till we find ourselves launched on the sea, and lose sight of the shore. Whoever vaunts himself as

sinless, Paul did not: "I have not attained," says he, "I am not already perfect"—"I am less than the least of all saints"—"I am the chief of sinners." —Not that there is no difference between a saint and a sinner. Job does not mean that he loved sin, or lived in it. His friends accused him of this; but he denied it; and, turning to God, could say, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." But he knew that in many things he offended; and in every thing came short of the glory of God. He was aware of the remains of sin opposing, hindering, vexing, polluting, his renewed mind: and though they appeared not to the view of others in gross transgressions, they were constantly felt by himself in an evil heart of unbelief, prone to depart from the living God; and constraining him to sigh, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

— And let us observe, also, when this acknowledgment was made. It was immediately after God's interposition, and appearance, and address: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." Then he displayed before him some of his works and perfections. "Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. *Then* Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile"—Teaching us, that the more we have to do with God, the more we shall see and feel our nothingness and unworthiness. What can make us so sensible of our ignorance, as *His* wisdom; of our weakness, as *His* power; of our pollution, as *His* purity—the purity of Him in whose sight the very heavens are not clean! Those are struck with little things, who have never been abroad to see greater *ones*. But travelling enlarges the mind, and fills

it with new and superior images; so that, on our return, we think nothing of the river, and the hill, and the plain, of our native village. The Queen of Sheba prided herself upon her magnificence, till she came to Jerusalem, and had seen Solomon in all *his* glory. He that has been introduced to the Lord of all, and has had communion with him, will never think highly of himself again. "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Ah! said Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

"The more thy glories strike mine eye,
"The humbler I shall lie."

— And I need not be afraid of this—my pride is the only prevention of my happiness—

"Thus while *I* sink, my *joys* shall rise
"Unmeasurably high."

DEC. 4.—"*Make me to know my transgression and my sin.*" Job xiii. 23.

THE desire of knowledge seems natural to every man. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, But who wishes to know *himself?* Yet this is the knowledge we want. And there are two things concerning ourselves, which it argues a gracious state of mind to be willing to know—Our mortality, and our depravity—A natural man turns away from both these. But, says David, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days,

what it is; that I may know how frail I am." And, says Job, "Make me to know my transgression and my sin."

To explore the offences of others, is a common wish. The information not only gratifies curiosity, but feeds malevolence; and furnishes the salt which seasons the conversation of the multitude. But, says Job, "Make me to know *my* transgression and *my* sin."

And what does he wish to know concerning them? Their existence. Their number. Their guilt. Their pollution. Their aggravation.

And this knowledge he seeks from God. He alone can teach us to profit. Conviction is the work of his own Spirit. But he uses means; and shews us our transgression and our sin—by the Law—and by the Gospel—and by friends and enemies—and by the dispensations of his providence. But he does it gradually. We could not bear all the disclosure at once—It would drive us into distraction or despair. He therefore tells us to turn again into the chamber of imagery, and we shall see greater abominations. And this will serve to explain a case in the Christian's experience. He supposes himself to grow worse, because he grows wiser. He seems more sinful, because he is more enlightened—There is not more evil in him; but he sees more.

The effect of this knowledge, in the first instance, will be wonder—It calls us out of darkness into God's marvellous light. We are astonished that He has borne with us so long—We are astonished that we have acted such a foolish, such an ungrateful, part—We are astonished that we did not see these things before: for they now strike us with all the force of evidence—And we are astonished that we see them now; since the thousands around us are blind still; and we were once blind also. But the result of the discovery will be as important and useful as it is surprising.

Self-knowledge will produce self-annihilation. Self-vindication will be at an end; and we shall condemn ourselves. Self-complacency will be at an end; and we shall loathe ourselves. Self-dependence will be at an end; and we shall have no confidence in the flesh. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

— Hence will arise the endearment of the Saviour. How precious is the refuge, now the danger is seen! How inviting the healing fountain appears, now we feel our disease! For want of this sensibility, many read and hear of the Lord Jesus with indifference. How can it be otherwise? They that are whole, need not the Physician, but they that are sick. The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry, every bitter thing is sweet.

— Hence, also, submission, under afflictive dispensations. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, said the Church, because I have sinned against him. Why, says Jeremiah, should a living man complain? Aaron's recollection of his making a calf just before, kept him dumb in the loss of his sons. And David felt, from his adultery and murder, how well it became him to say, in Absalom's rebellion, Here I am; let the Lord do what seemeth him good. If a Christian has nothing criminal in particular to fix upon, he will see enough, in his general temper and walk, to keep him from thinking that God deals hardly with him. The wonder with him will be—not that his trials are so many; but so few—not that so many of his comforts are taken; but that any are left.

— Another advantage, will be habitual gratitude. The proud are never thankful. Heap whatever favours upon them, and what reward have ye? They think they deserve it. You are only doing your duty—You are doing justly, rather than loving

mercy. But when we are humble, in the same proportion we shall be grateful. When we feel that we are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies, how thankful shall we be for the bread we eat, and the water that we drink!—What, then, for the Word of his truth! and the Son of his love!

Finally. As we are sensible of our depravity, we shall be tender towards others. Faithful dealing with ourselves, will always be accompanied with candid dealing with our fellow-creatures. When we are much at home, we cannot live much abroad. When we are employed in pulling the beams out of our own eyes, we shall not have much time for finding beams in those of others. If there be a difference between us and them, we shall ascribe it, when we know ourselves, to the mercy and grace of God—He has made us to differ—and we have nothing but what we have received. If we meet with things which are really wrong, and which we cannot deny, we shall not rejoice, but weep. And if a brother be overtaken in a fault, we shall restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.

Maundrell, in his Fable of the Bees; and Rochefacoult, in his Maxims; and many Infidel writers; have shewn great acquaintance with the depravity of human nature. But they learned it from the Devil—and the scholars felt like the teacher. They delighted in the subject. They loved to expose it. It was their interest to degrade and vilify human nature, to draw from it arguments for hatred, injury, selfishness, and distrust. But God teaches us the depravity of human nature, principally through our own depravity. And, with his teaching, he communicates his own Spirit. We therefore pity our common nature. We mourn over its dishonour. We pray for our fellow sinners. We long to save them.

DECEMBER 5.

DEC. 5.—"*This* man *shall be the peac*
the Assyrian shall come into our land." Mic

THAT the Messiah is the person here intend
not be denied by those who read the verses
diately preceding; and which speak so expr
his incarnation and glory. The word *man*,
as the italics apprize us, is not in the
The sentence therefore reads, "And this s
the peace"—*i. e.*, this person, of whom the
had been just speaking; he who was born
ruler in Bethlehem, and whose goings fort
from everlasting—"He shall stand and feed
strength of the Lord, in the majesty of th
of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: f
shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.
translators, therefore, should rather have put
word Ruler or Shepherd. But, whatever be t
plement, it all comes to the same, provided *He*
be understood; who is all our salvation, and
desire—For "this shall be the peace, wh
Assyrian shall come into our land." But
this Assyrian? The word cannot be taken li
The Assyrians never entered Judea after th
of Christ. It is therefore used, metaphorica
some enemy; nothing being more commo
for the Sacred Writers to express, by the n
Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon, any significant adv
as those powers had distinguished themsel
their hatred, oppression, and enslaving of th
The intimation, therefore, is better than if
been more definite; as we may now include
thing that annoys and alarms; every thin
would injure or destroy—Be the case what i
he is our principal, our only relief. He d
exempt us from trouble and conflict; but he
us assistance, comfort, and deliverance. Storm
arise; but he is our strong-hold—Enemie
assail us; but he will give us victory at la

even now keep our minds in perfect peace, being stayed on him.

Let us think of several of these Assyrians; and see how, when they invade us, and would swallow us up, he is our peace.—Does the broken Law of God threaten us? I say, the broken law of God—for a man has nothing to fear from it, when it is perfectly kept; For the man that doeth these things, shall live in them. But the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The curse enters through every breach of transgression. And who is not, therefore, exposed? Who can be so ignorant as to imagine, that he has continued in all things written in the Book of the Law to do them! Now here is a condition to be in! The commandment coming—sin reviving—hope dying—and nothing expected, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment! But he is our peace, who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification—

"Go, ye that rest upon the law,
"And toil and seek salvation there;
"Look to the flames that Moses saw;
"And fear, and tremble, and despair.

"But I'll retire beneath the Cross—
"Saviour, at thy dear feet I lie;
"And the keen sword that justice draws,
"Flaming and red, shall pass me by."

Or does our adversary the Devil terrify? Oh! you say, when I think of his wiles, and strength, and his successes for near six thousand years; and when I consider myself—here is enough to fill me, not only with dread, but despair—what am I, to the powers of darkness? No more than a "worm to a mountain!" Well, be it so: the promise is, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; for thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small as the dust." In the Lord you have not only righteousness, but strength. Think of him—and take courage. In all

these things you are more than conquerors, through him that loved you.

Or do we complain of the sin that dwelleth in us? A Christian must feel this, and ought to feel it, and be deeply humbled before God on the account of it. Paul felt it; and felt it more than all his sufferings—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But where does he find relief? "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"—"He will save me from my sins; and not only from their dominion—but their very being. He has begun a good work in me, and he will finish it. My sanctification *will* be as complete, as my justification now is. He is not only able to keep me from falling, but to present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Or do we consider the troubles of life? In accordance with this very case, he said to his disciples, In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace. And they found it so. They could acknowledge, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Modern Christians may not be called to suffer persecutions as they did; but they may be the subjects of personal and relative trials, which require the same support and solace; and they equally belong to him; and are never dearer to his heart than in the hour of affliction: and he will not leave them comfortless. Is it nothing to know, that he has removed every thing penal from thy sufferings?—that he will never leave thee nor forsake thee?—that his grace shall be sufficient for thee?—and that all thy sorrows shall yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness?

— But death! Death is called the King of Terrors. Who can wonder that we should feel at the approach of it? And where would be the triumph of faith, if we did not? But it is possible to rise

above this enemy. We know it from Scripture. We know it from observation. And whence comes the victory? Persons may die insensibly; or they may banish the subject from their minds—but, if a man thinks of it, and thinks of it properly, there is only one relief when this Assyrian approaches us. It is to see him that has "abolished death." It is to hear him saying, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." And this is not all. The enemy is not only disarmed by him, but turned into a friend. The curse is converted into a blessing—To die, is gain—and gain too generally—in the experience, as well as—always in the result. Well, therefore, could David say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

— Here behold the Consolation of Israel. Whatever would dismay us, let us look towards him, and say—"This same shall comfort us." Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

DEC. 6.—"*Hast not Thou made an hedge about him?*" Job. i. 10.

THIS was the question of Satan. The design of it was crafty and cruel—It was to insinuate, that Job's religion was all mercenary. Therefore, no sooner had God extolled him (who can stand before envy?) than "Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him?" But though the motive he ascribes to Job is false, it is otherwise with the condition he represents him to be in. It was true—that God had made a hedge about him.

he same hedge surrounds all believers. Three things ıay be inferred from it.

First. God's people must be dear and valuable, herwise he would not make a hedge about them. len do not incur expence, and take pains to ence in a wilderness, a common, or a dunghill; ut only what they set a price upon. "Since," says od, "thou hast been precious in my sight, thou ast been honourable, and I have loved thee." This ve "passeth knowledge." His vineyard, his garden, is jewels, his children, his bride; are not so dear nd precious to their owner, as all the subjects of ivine grace are to God—"The Lord taketh plea- ure in them that fear him; in them that hope in is mercy."

Secondly. They must be liable to danger and ıjury—Why, else, should he make a hedge about ıem? They are exposed to the same perils with thers. But they have many which are peculiar to ıemselves, because of their new state, and character, nd privileges. David admits this—"Thou preparest table before me, in the presence of my enemies." hey were all around him, looking on, ready to eize his comfort, and destroy his person. What is ıe language of every awakened soul? "Lord, how e they increased that trouble me! Many there be ıat rise up against me." And as they are numerous,) they are malicious, wise, and powerful; and would ıon overcome him—but his help cometh from the ame of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Thirdly. They must be safe, whatever evils en- ompass them. For they do not lie opened and nguarded—God has made an hedge about them. Ve have often heard the remark—and it is as true) it is common—"They are well kept, whom God eeps." What he does for the safety of his people, ıust be effectual. Therefore the Church says, Save me, and I shall *be* saved; for Thou art my raise." His power is almighty; and he saveht by

his right hand them that put their trust in him, from them that rise up against them. He keeps them as the apple of the eye. He that keepeth Israel, never slumbers nor sleeps. Lest any hurt them, says He, I will keep them night and day. But how far does this hedge extend? It reaches to his estate—his business—his dwelling-place—his family—his reputation—his body—his soul—"Hast not Thou made an hedge about *him?* and about his *house?* and about *all* that he hath on *every* side?"

But here it may be asked, How does this subject harmonize with observation and experience? Do not His people sometimes suffer losses and injuries, as well as others? We must distinguish between their spiritual and their temporal condition. With regard to the former, their security is absolute—They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. But as to the latter, their preservation is conditional. It is never absolutely promised: and the reason is—that it is not essential to their welfare. Yea, sometimes the removal of a temporal good, is a greater blessing than the continuance of it; and is even indispensable to some higher advantage. But, with regard to every injury or loss in their temporal interests, there are two things which should always be remembered; and they ought to be sufficient to set their hearts at rest. The one is—that the loss or injury is entirely under the Divine permission. Nothing can touch a hair of their head, without leave from their heavenly Father—Satan could do nothing against Peter, till he had "desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat." And so here. Satan walked around this hedge; and peeped through; and stood tip-toe to look over, with envy and malice—but could not touch his body, no, nor even one of his servants or sheep, till God, for the trial of Job, allowed him. The other is—that the permission is always and invariably regulated by the wisdom and goodness of his God, who loves them

infinitely better than they love themselves. He that spared not his own Son, will withhold no good thing from them. He does not afflict willingly: but every trial he employs has a purpose to serve, that will evince, in due time, even the kindness of the dispensation, and enable the sufferers to acknowledge, with praise, It is good for me that I have been afflicted.

Let his people, therefore, hearken unto Him, and dwell safely; and be in quiet from the fear of evil.

Dec. 7.—"*And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.*" Luke ix. 42.

— Fearful of losing his prey—hating to have him cured—and wishing to prevent the display of the Saviour's goodness and power. He could not, indeed, hinder the deliverance; but he did what he could.—

There is no coming to our Saviour now, as persons came in the days of his flesh. He is no more in the world, as to his bodily presence—Yet we may come to him spiritually, by faith and prayer—And, in the suffering of this patient, we have an emblem of what we may meet with, as we are approaching. We can never seek him in vain: but our case may seem worse before relief arrives.—We may be thrown down, and torn in the way. God saw the affliction of Israel, and resolved to save them: but before they left Egypt, their bondage was more sorely felt; and as soon as they had escaped, Pharaoh pursued them, and hemmed them in. As long as people remain regardless of Christ, the Enemy keeps them in peace; but when they begin to enquire in earnest after him—then commences the conflict: and this is the language of many an applicant, as "he is

a coming"—"O my God! my soul is cast down within me."

Some of his difficulties and discouragements may arise from the opposition of friends and relations. Marvel not, said the Saviour, if the world hate you. We have no reason to believe, our religion is the religion of the Bible, if it be palatable to the taste of carnal minds. How often, as soon as a man becomes decided, is he had in derision of all around him, and like one mocked of his neighbour! And is it not trying to proceed in a course that will break up connexions, otherwise agreeable? and draw upon him their sneer, or their laugh? their ridicule, or their menaces?—Yet he must go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. And he ought to rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name. But every thing cannot be expected at first. The trial is greater when a man's foes are those of his own house—when the persecution comes from those he loves; and ought even to obey—only in the Lord. But the trial is greatest—at least to a grateful and ingenuous mind, when the persecution results, not from violence and threatenings; but from kindness, and entreaties, and tears. Yet, through all this he must press—"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me—and he that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple."

Sometimes the coming soul has difficulties arising from ignorance of the method of salvation. These, indeed, will not remain long, when the heart is brought into a proper state, and the man cries, What must I do to be saved? But some are alarmed before they are enlightened—as a person may be awakened in the dark, and not know which way to flee. Or as a patient may be sensible of the danger of his disease, before he knows the physician or the remedy. Some have not had parents who taught them the truth, as it is in Jesus: and they have no access to evangelical preaching; and they

are not blessed with such Christian companions as can guide their feet into the path of peace. What wonder, therefore, if such, for awhile, should betake themselves (for something, in such cases, will be done—they cannot sit still) to improper expedients, and self-righteous means of relief? For all legalists are not of the same kind. Some are such from disposition—and these are the bitterest adversaries of the Gospel; and the presentation of the truth, only draws forth their enmity. But others are such, from want of better information only: and when they find the light, they rejoice in it—"Oh! this is what my soul was following hard after—O that I had known it earlier; and, instead of working, had believed on him that justifieth the ungodly—and, instead of attempting to build up a wretched shelter of my own, I had only fled for refuge to the hope set before me!"

Allied to this, is another discouragement the coming sinner feels, springing from doubts and fears, when he does perceive the way, and is informed that there is salvation in no other. Pressed down with such a sense of his unworthiness, and with such views of the number and heinousness of his sins, as he never had before; he is ready to conclude, that such immense blessings cannot be for *him*; and that *his* claiming them would be no better than presumption. Let not such a desponding soul refuse to be comforted. Let him ask—What recommendation had Manasseh? Where am *I* excluded from hope? Does he not say, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth? If I have nothing with which to purchase, am I not invited to "buy without money, and without price?"

"Retreat beneath his wings,
"And in his grace confide:
"This more exalts the King of kings,
"Than all your works beside."

An apprehension, too, of the arduous duties of the Christian life, is frequently very dismaying. The Scripture tells him, that this life is a building and a warfare; a very expensive building, and a very awful warfare: and enjoins him, before he begins, to count the cost of the one, and the resources of the other. He does this—and feels himself perfectly inadequate to both. And so he may feel, and ought to feel: for when he is poor, then is he rich; and when he is weak, then is he strong. But fear not, says the Saviour; for I am with thee. My grace is sufficient for thee. As thy days, so shall thy strength be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Finally. There are things among the professors of religion, which often perplex and scandalize young converts. Such are the diversities of opinion among them. And their alienation from each other, because of their little distinctions. And the falls of some. And the backslidings of others. Older and wiser Christians know how to account for all this, without shaking their faith and hope—though it is always grievous even to them: but the weak find them stumbling-blocks, over which they often fall. For which reason, the Apostle says to the believing Hebrews, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed."

Two things must now be fixed in the mind. The one is—that whatever would impede our coming to Christ, is from Satan; and should be resisted accordingly. The other is—that, whatever difficulties we may encounter—come to him we must. It is not a matter of indifference—It is the one thing needful—We perish without it—"Ye will not come unto me *that* ye might have life."

DEC. 8.—"*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*"
2 Cor. xi. 30.

WE may consider these infirmities under two classes.

First; as outward and natural. Thus they include bodily weaknesses and indispositions. Some, by reason of a healthful and firm constitution, know little of these infirmities, and can scarcely sympathize with those who are the subjects of them. But Paul was no stranger to them—I was with you, says he to the Corinthians, in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.—They also include all other external afflictions—whatever lowers a man's condition, and weakens him in the opinion of the world, who always judge after outward appearances. If it were necessary to prove this, we might refer to the Apostle's sufferings, as recorded in the preceding verses, and to which he obviously alludes: and also to what he immediately subjoins, as an illustration—in his escape from Damascus, by the wall in a basket; and the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him—ending with his noble avowal—"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

There is something wonderful in this. For all these things are viewed as disadvantages, and give rise to emotions of grief and shame, rather than of joy and glory. People glory in their beauty—not in their deformity: in their strength—not in their weakness: in their dignity—not in their meanness: in their praise—not in their disgrace: in their successes—not in their disappointments. But Paul says, "If I must needs glory, *I* will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." Let us make a distinction here. Absolutely considered, these things are evils in themselves: and it does not become a Christian to pray for them, or go out of his way

to meet with them. But when he is called to suffer them according to the will of God, he should remember that there are purposes to be answered by them, which render them *relatively* valuable and excellent. If medicine be regarded only as to its taste, we say it is offensive, and we should decline it: but when the necessity and usefulness of it are perceived, and we think of the health to be restored, and the life to be prolonged by it; we not only consent to take it, but thankfully pay for the otherwise disagreeable remedy. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." So it is here: Paul glories in things which *concern* his infirmities. What are these? We may consider them as preservatives or preventions—Thus, when Israel was going astray after her lovers, says God, "I will hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not be able to find her paths."—And as restorers—Thus David says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." I was sick; he bled me; and I recovered.—And as probations—to evince and display the reality and degree of our religion; the tenderness of God's care; the supports of his grace; and the truth of his Word. Of this quality were Job's sufferings.—And as preparatives—for usefulness here, and heaven hereafter. How these views of faith alter our estimate of the dispensation, and our feelings under it!

But, secondly; we may consider these infirmities as inward and spiritual. Thus they comprise all those weaknesses and deficiencies of grace under which the best now labour; and which lead them to pray, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us." Something is wanting in their faith, hope, courage, patience, and spiritual understanding. Even Paul could say, I have not attained; I am not already perfect. But are not these infir-

mities matter of humiliation, rather than of glorying? Yes; the believer blushes and groans over them. Nor will an apprehension of his security reconcile him to his remaining imperfections. Yea, a persuasion of God's constant love towards him will induce him the more to bewail them. Yet there are things which *concern* these infirmities, for which he feels thankful, and in which he rejoices. Four of these may be mentioned.

First. The means of grace are things which concern our infirmities. They are rendered necessary by them, and are designed to relieve them. In heaven they are laid aside: there they are needless. But the Christian now cries, Send us help from the sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion. And by waiting upon the Lord, he renews his strength.

Secondly. The promises are things which concern our infirmities. "To him that hath shall be given." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." When we read all this, let the weak say, I am strong. But for these assurances we must despond: but now we read, and go on; read, and fight on; read, and suffer on. We rejoice at his word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Thirdly. The influences of the Spirit are things which concern our infirmities. How is a Christian to live, or walk? He lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit. How does he pray? In the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Observe the ground of the Apostle's hope, with regard to himself, in the issue of all his sufferings: "I know

that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." And with him there is a rich abundance: and in him all fulness dwells: and to him we have always a free and invited access.

Fourthly. The last thing that concerns our infirmities, is the removal of them by death. A certain removal. A removal nigh at hand. An entire removal—Every one of them will be done away with—and for ever!

DEC. 9.—"*I am a burden to myself.*" Job vii. 20.

— AND perhaps this is not all—perhaps you are a burden to others also.

— But we will leave this; and enquire whether you are a burden to yourself. We may put the complaint into the mouth of four classes.

It is sometimes the language of the afflicted. Thus it was the exclamation of Job. We talk of trouble—He could say, "Behold, and see if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow." Read the affecting relation; dwell on all the dismal items; and wonder not that *he* should say, "I am a burden to myself." If we cannot approve of the strength of his complaint, we hardly know how to condemn it. God himself overlooks it; and only holds him forth as an example of patience. All sufferers cannot, indeed, say, truly, as he did, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Yet the heart's bitterness is known only to itself. We cannot determine the pressure of another's mind under suffering: for the feeling of affliction may be actually much greater, than we should have supposed from the degree of it. But afflictions may be great in themselves, from their number, and frequency,

and suddenness, and subject. Is this thy case? Yield not to impatience and despondency. Such afflictions have often introduced a train of mercies; and the Valley of Achor has been a door of hope. How many in heaven, how many on earth, are now thanking God for their trials! He knows how to deliver. Say—"Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

It is sometimes the language of the disengaged and idle. None so little enjoy life, and are such burdens to themselves, as those who have nothing to do—for,

> "A want of occupation is not rest—
> "A mind quite vacant, is a mind distress'd."

Such a man is out of God's order; and opposing his obvious design in the faculties he has given him, and the condition in which he has placed him—Nothing, therefore, is promised in the Scripture to the indolent. Take the indolent, with regard to exertion—What indecision! What delay! What reluctance! What apprehension! "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets." "The way of a slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain." Take him, with regard to health—What sluggishness of circulation! What depression of spirits! What dulness of appetite! What enervation of frame! Take him, with regard to temper and enjoyment—Who is pettish and fretful? Who feels wanton and childish cravings? Who is too soft to bear any of the hardships of life? Who broods over every little vexation and inconvenience? Who not only increases real, but conjures up imaginary evils? and gets no sympathy from any one in either? Who feels time wearisome and irksome? Who is devoured by ennui and spleen? Who oppresses others with their company? and their questions, and

censorious talk? The active only, have the true relish of life. He who knows not what it is to labour, knows not what it is to enjoy. Recreation is only valuable, as it unbends us—the idle know nothing of it. It is exertion that renders rest delightful; and sleep sweet and undisturbed. That the happiness of life depends on the regular prosecution of some laudable purpose or lawful calling, which engages, helps, and enlivens, all our powers; let those bear witness who, after spending years in active usefulness, retire, to *enjoy themselves*. Prayers should be always offered up for their servants and wives—and for themselves too—they are a burden to themselves.

It is the language of the wicked. Not always, indeed: but much oftener than they are willing to own. It may not come from them in the circle of their companions; but it is sighed out in private, when the charm of amusement has ceased, and conscience tries to be heard. They may pretend (for hypocrisy is not confined to religion) to be peaceful; but they know that one thought of God is sufficient to destroy all the calm. They may profess to admire the world; but they know it affords them no satisfaction—They know they return jaded from all their excursions of avarice, ambition, and sensuality, still asking, Who will shew us any good?—They know that, in this uncertain state, they are always trembling for the idols of their hearts; that they look for no support in trouble; and dread the approach of death—to the fear of which they are all their life-time subject to bondage. Sin and sorrow are inseparable. God himself has told us that the way of transgressors is hard, and that there is no peace to the wicked. Many sins bring their own punishments along with them. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. "Pride is restless as the wind." What a torment is the spirit of revenge! What must be the apprehension of the thief! and the terror of the murderer! What the remorse of a villain who has seduced a fellow-

reature from the path of virtue, and made her igno-
inious and wretched for life! What the feelings of
drunkard, who has ruined his business, and covered
is wife and children with rags! How often does the
nner become the contempt of the neighbourhood!
low often does he contract infirmities and diseases,
hich lie down with him in the dust! Yes; *he* may
ell say, I am a burden to myself—and, to get rid
f the intolerable load, he not rarely lays violent hands
pon himself; saying, with Cain, My punishment is
reater than I can bear.

It may be the language of the godly. We mean,
ot only or principally as they are afflicted—then
ey would coincide with the first class of com-
lainants—Many, indeed, are the afflictions of the
ghteous—and they are not required to be insensible
nder them. But there are things which they feel
ore painfully than outward trouble. The tempta-
ons of Satan—A world lying in wickedness—The
nperfections of their graces—The remains of corrup-
on within them—Wanderings in duty—An evil
eart of unbelief—Distrust of their best Friend—The
rievings of his Holy Spirit. Another cannot enter
nto all this—It requires the feelings of a renewed
ind: but this induces the believer to say, "I loathe
;—I would not live always." O wretched man that
am! said Paul; who shall deliver me from the body
f this death?

Is there any relief? The very experience is a
oken for good. Your case is not peculiar—All your
rethren, while in this tabernacle, groan too, being
urdened. You will not be a burden to yourself
lways—or long. You now say, Behold, I am vile:
herefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes. But
ou will soon be reconciled to yourselves, without
ride—Your knowledge will be without obscurity.
our services, without imperfection. Your pleasure,
ithout pain. And He who is now keeping you from

falling, will present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

DEC. 10.—"*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*" Rev. i. 10.

THIS proves how early, among Christians, one day in the week was distinguished from the rest. And it is obvious, that the day thus distinguished, was the *first* day of the week; for no other is ever styled "the Lord's day," in the New Testament, or by any of the antient writers. It is called "the Lord's day," not only by way of distinction, but excellency; being appropriated to his service, and consecrated to his honour, as the day of his resurrection from the dead, and of entering into his rest from the works of redemption.

To be in the Spirit, often signifies, to be inspired, or to receive communications immediately from God; and it is certain that John was thus honoured. But the phrase may be used in reference to a spirituality of mind: and doubtless John experienced this also; and it prepared him for the sublime discoveries he was favoured with. Though miracles have ceased, the Spirit is still given in his ordinary influences; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. We are required to pray in the Holy Ghost; to worship God in the Spirit; to live and walk in the Spirit. Hence the common notion of our being in the Spirit on the Lord's day is perfectly scriptural. But we must distinguish between our being in the Spirit, and the Spirit being in us. The latter denotes the reality of his influence, the former the abundance. Thus we say, a man is in love, or in liquor, or in a passion—to intimate that he is entirely

seized and governed by it. We are not only to possess the Spirit, but to be possessed by it—"Be ye filled with the Spirit." It is not enough for us to be in a spiritual state—but frame.

We must not, however, confine the import of this expression as some do. They never think of their being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, but when they are relieved, comforted, delighted. We love feeling in religion; but religious feelings are many, and various. It is desirable to pass the Sabbath in liveliness, liberty, and joy: and we read of the Spirit of life; and of a free Spirit; and of the comfort of the Holy Ghost. But a mournful Sabbath may be a very profitable one; and we are never more in the Spirit, than when we are deeply sensible of our unworthiness; and exclaim, at the foot of the Cross, Behold, I am vile; and hunger and thirst after righteousness. For, is he not the Spirit of truth? the convincer of sin? the Spirit of grace and of supplication? And does he not lead us to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to mourn for him?

Who does not know, by experience, that the day and the Spirit are not always thus united? Who has not had Sabbaths devoid of all proper religious affections? This should be a matter of deep humiliation—How piercing should be the thought of a lost Sabbath! Lost, never to return! Lost, yet to be accounted for! But what is a dull and formal attendance on the services of the season, without those influences which the day requires, and is in itself adapted to produce?

As the richest Sabbath, with regard to means and ordinances, may be passed without the Spirit; so we may be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when the day is attended with few, or none of these advantages. And was it not thus with the beloved disciple? Oh! there are Sabbaths when every thing is attractive: when we go to the house of God in company; when our eyes see our teachers; when

our ears hear the joyful sound of salvation by grace! But John's Sabbath was a day of suffering, of privation, of exile, of solitude, in a desert isle—

"Where the sound of the church-going bell
"Those rocks and those valleys ne'er heard:
"Never sigh'd at the sound of a knell,
"Or smiled when a Sabbath appear'd."

But heaven was opened unto him; and perhaps he never had such a Sabbath on earth before. A Christian may never be less alone, than when alone. His consolations may equal, yea, exceed his sufferings. While his body is fettered, his soul may range in all the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.

Yes, you may be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when denied the privileges of the sanctuary. If you keep away, from indifference, or indolence, or to save expence, when you have the ability to procure accommodation; or from any of those excuses which would detain you from nothing else; you have no reason to expect the Divine sanction. But sometimes travelling, even on the Lord's day, by land or by water, may be unavoidable. Or accident, or disease, or infirmity of age, may confine you. In which case the Lord will not despise his prisoners. And they shall know the blessedness of those whose strength is in him, and in whose hearts are the ways of them. It is better to want opportunity and power, than the will, when we serve Him who looketh at the heart. Nothing can be a substitute for Him—but he is a substitute for every thing—and he is always accessible—and "if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

DEC. 11.—"*And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.*" Job. xlii. 10.

JOB was once the greatest man in the East. But he was stripped of every thing, but life; and became, as a sufferer, proverbial for ever. How long his calamities continued, we cannot determine. At length, however, the shadow of death was turned into the morning. His troubles were all removed; his losses all repaired; and his latter end blessed more than his beginning. Hence, says the Apostle James, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

— His state of affliction is called "his captivity." Did then, the Chaldeans and Sabeans, when they robbed him, make him also a prisoner? The term is metaphorical. Yet there is a striking reality, as the foundation of it. By the permission of Providence, Satan, for awhile, had him in his possession, to go as far as he pleased, in destroying his substance, and afflicting his body. In consequence of this, a troop of woes seized him; and his feet, as he says, were made fast in the stocks. David, also, expresses himself much in the same way—"Bring my soul out of prison"—He despiseth not his prisoners. A state of affliction is not only unpleasant, but confining. Losses in property abridge a man of his former excursions of pleasure, and curtail his entertainments. Sickness arrests a man, and leads him away from company and business, and confines him to a bed of languishing. Yea, it detains a good man from the Sanctuary; and when he thinks of his former freedom and privileges, he pours out his soul in him: for he had gone to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day.

— His deliverance was of the Lord—"The Lord turned again his captivity." "He that is our God,

is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." Some ascribe their deliverances to chance; some, to the favour of their fellow-creatures; some, to their own wisdom and care—all of which is no better than idolatry. Faith will lead us to see and acknowledge the agency of God's hand, whatever means may have been employed. And, till God command deliverance, vain is the help of man. "Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening." But *he* knows how to deliver: and when his time is come, he not only can, but he will, make a way for our escape. "Therefore," says the Church, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."

— But it is peculiarly worthy of our remark, that the deliverance was accomplished "when he prayed for his friends." These friends had acted a very unkind part. They had not only mistaken his case, but charged him with hypocrisy; and loaded him with reproach. This was no easy thing to bear. He labours to convince them; but in vain. Yet he felt no resentment; but even prayed for them! This is the best thing we can do, in such cases. It will keep us more than any thing else from the effects of unhallowed passion; and enable us to comply with the command, "Love your enemies." We *cannot* love them *as* we love others; but if we can sincerely pray for them, it is a proof we love them, in the sense of the injunction.

But we here see, not only the forgiving temper of Job, but the efficacy of prayer. As it is said, The Lord turned again his captivity *when* he prayed for his friends; it would seem, that the deliverance commenced while he was engaged in the exercise—This is no unusual thing: for, says God, "*While* they call, I will answer." But, if it did not take place *in* the exercise, it followed *immediately after*.

thus it affords a proof, that he is a God hearing
:r. Thus it encourages us to come to the Throne
s Grace—
- And not only for ourselves; but for others
-
- And not only for their welfare; but our own.
only because it may avail much for them;
ılso for ourselves. Thus Job's praying not only
ned pardon for his friends, but deliverance for
:lf! And though he had often prayed under
fflictions, the prayer honoured with his deliver-
was not a personal, but relative, prayer. Let
ot forget this—and let us extend it to all other
of beneficence. If we do no good to those
are the objects, we must do good to those who
he agents. It cannot be in vain, with regard to
:lves. Our prayer, if not successful, will return
our own bosom, and leave a blessing behind it.
ɔ whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace
this house. And if the Son of Peace be there,
peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to
ıgain."

EC. 12.—"*And there was Mary Magdalene, and ther Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.*" Matt. xxvii. 61.

WHILE upon the Cross He hung,
The Marys near him stayed;
And, when from the tree releas'd,
Beheld where he was laid:
Fearless to the place they ran;
All their hope was buried there;
And, with grief, and wonder, sat
Before the sepulchre.

Love it was detain'd them here:
And sacred was the spot:
Soon the scene reviv'd their faith,
And mem'ry ne'er forgot.

From the crowd *I* glad withdraw,
And, with them, to muse I 'm come;
And prefer to Eden's bliss,
One tear at such a tomb.

— Here, within this grave, now sleeps,
The best, the only Friend;
Here, the lips of Truth are seal'd,
And Mercy's journeys end.
Here, the light, the life of men,
Is early quench'd, and dead—
How deserveless now appear
All other tears I 've shed!

Ah! how low his sacred head
Reposes here for me!
And how deep, though once so rich,
Is now his poverty!—
Nought of earth, in life or death,
His own he ever knew;
Borrow'd was his place of birth;
His grave was borrow'd, too!

— But what terrors seize my frame!
A trembling shakes the ground;
And the door, though thrice secur'd,
Is now wide open found—
On the stone the angel sits,
And frowns the guards to flight;—
Yet his looks, and words, to me,
Speak safety and delight.

'He thou seekest, is not here;
'Come, view his lowly bed;
'And, with haste, go tell his friends,
'He 's risen from the dead.'
— As I go, himself I meet—
'All hail!' he greeting cries;
'I have crush'd sin, death, and hell,
'And open'd Paradise!

'I 'm alive for evermore;
'And all that mourn with thee,
'Like myself, their Head, shall live,
'For evermore with me.'
'Tis enough—in every state
This truth my hope revives—
And, should every comfort die,
I know my Saviour *lives*.

DEC. 13.—"*And this I pray, That your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge, and in all judgment.*" Phil. i. 9.

ACCORDING to this prayer, there is nothing in which we should abound more than love. It is the fulfilling of the law. The end of the Gospel-commandment. The bond of perfectness. Without it, whatever be our attainments, professions, or sacrifices, we are NOTHING.

Yet we are to abound in it, *wisely*. This is not found in all religious characters. In one, we perceive zeal; in another, discretion. One is clear, but cold. Another is warm, but inconsiderate. If we could meet with an individual who, in his experience and practice, blended these qualities; who had the heart, as well as the head, and the head, as well as the heart, of the Christian: *he* would be the prayer of the Apostle fulfilled—"I pray, That your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge, and in all judgment."

Our love does not thus abound, when we do not distinguish between what is supreme and what is subordinate. There are things in religion which are essential, and things which are only circumstantial. Am I to lay as much stress upon the latter as upon the former? Is the form of the railing of a bridge to be compared with the foundation of the buttresses, or the key-stones of the arch? Is the finger, though useful, of the same importance to the continuance of life, as the heart and the lungs? What is an article about church government, or the mode of administering an ordinance, compared with the doctrine of justification by faith, or redemption by the blood of Christ! I venerate a man who is all-diligence to convert sinners from the error of their way, and save souls from death: but I cannot feel the same towards the zealot of bigotry, whose aim is to make proselytes to his own peculiarities; and

who regards his community, not as a *part*, but as a *party*.

Persons may not be judicious in their devotional exercises. By the frequency of public attendances, they may exclude or abridge the duties of the family, or the closet. They may so lengthen out the worship at the domestic altar, as to produce in children and servants weariness and aversion. Persons may hazard their health, by going forth under bodily indisposition; forgetting that God requires mercy, and not sacrifice; and that when *He* deprives us of the ability, he accepts the ready mind.

Nor does our love abound in knowledge and in all judgment, when it carries us out of our own places and stations to be useful. Grace always gives us the desire to do good—but Providence must furnish the opportunities. We are not to be unruly, or break the ranks, as the word is; but to march orderly, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Lord puts us where we ought to be; and enjoins us to abide in our calling. There are, indeed, occasional deviations from this rule; but they are exceptions; and must be justified by their own circumstances. When Saul's courtiers reflected upon the Shepherd of Bethlehem, as a restless, ambitious young man, who wished to struggle out of obscurity into public life; he was conscious that he followed only the providence of God; and could make this appeal—"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." But there is danger, not only of impatience, but pride, in all changes attended with the hope of elevation—and surely it becomes a man to consult some one besides *himself* concerning them. A man, by acting unlawfully, may do good: but the result does not justify the means. Whatever excitements persons may have to act irregularly, they are, upon the whole, far most useful by consistency.

Their example, in the latter, *must* do good; but, in the former, it *may* lead astray. I have known men who have been stunned for life by striking their head against a pulpit. I have known preachers who have neglected their families, and left their children, to rove wild in the street or the field, while they were teaching in the villages. I have known females who have disregarded their husbands and household affairs, to run unseasonably after favourite ministers. "The wisdom of the prudent," says Solomon, "is to understand *his* way"—*i.e.*, what becomes *him* to do: whether as a master, or a servant; as a father, or a child; as rich, or as poor—in every relation and condition of life. Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?

Many err much in the discharge of the duties they owe to others. Reproof may be more than thrown away, owing to the manner in which it is applied. It is done in anger; but it should flow from the spirit of meekness. It is done in public; but we should tell our neighbour his fault alone. We should distinguish, also, between one disposition and another; and become all things to all men, if by any means we may gain some. He that winneth souls is wise—We must therefore walk in wisdom towards them that are without. Wisdom must regulate our discourse. We must know, when to speak. What to speak. How to speak—"A word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." We shall not talk discouragingly before those that are weak in the faith; nor perplex them with doubtful disputations. We may give strong meat to strong men; but babes require milk.

We may also err in cases of charity. Since we cannot relieve all the necessitous, we must endeavour to ascertain the most proper objects. Alms may become immoral by encouraging vice, or idleness. Religious societies are to be encouraged and supported; but God abhors robbery, for a burnt-offering.

And many an annual *printed* subscription robs, not only the tradesman, but the poor. Nothing is to incapacitate us to succour the domestic and personal distress which *Providence itself* brings immediately before us; and by which some sublimely pass, to attend public meetings—"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

These are not all the instances in which our love is to abound in knowledge and in all judgment. But these are sufficient to shew us, that wisdom is profitable to direct. Wherefore, let us not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Let us cultivate our minds. Let us faithfully review our own conduct; and see where we have been mistaken. Let us keep observation alive and awake. Let us walk with wise men. Let us be familiar with the Holy Scriptures, which can furnish us throughly unto all good works. Let us often read and study the Proverbs of Solomon. Let us constantly keep in view, the life of Jesus, who dealt prudently; and so was exalted, and extolled, and was very high. Above all, let us seek the Spirit of Truth—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

DEC. 14.—"*I will say unto God, Do not condemn me.*" Job. x. 2.

HE could have resolved on nothing better in his affliction, than betaking himself to God. It was turning to him that smote him; and resembling the child, who, when corrected by the mother, always

clings to her knee. We are too fond of taking complaints to men—

> "Were half the breath, thus vainly spent,
> "To Heav'n in supplication sent;
> "Our cheerful cry would oft'ner be—
> "Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

If I weep, says Job, "mine eye poureth out unto God:" and if I speak, "I will say unto God'

But what does he say? "Do not condemn Now there was no real ground for this fear. could say, I know that my Redeemer liveth; there is no condemnation to them that are in C Jesus. Their sins, once pardoned, if sought for, never be found. And their afflictions, howeve tressing, have nothing penal in them; they are like the fire to the gold, and pruning to the and medicine to the patient, and correction t child. We are chastened of the Lord, that we not be condemned with the world.

But the language implies, that he knew could charge him with guilt enough to con him, if he should deal with him after his d And every child of God feels this. In revie even the most innocent periods of his life, an devoutest services in which he was ever eng he exclaims, "Enter not into judgment wit servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified."

— It shews us also, that a child of God is to fear the displeasure of God in his afflic The people of the world, as we see in the c the Barbarians, with regard to Paul's viper; an caution of our Lord, with regard to the men on the Tower of Siloam fell; deem their fellow-cre sinners, because they suffer such things. And t we are much more disposed to judge others b erroneous rule than ourselves; there is some in calamity, says Madame de Stael, that ten

make all minds superstitious. We would rather say, that tends to revive the remembrance of a moral providence, and the belief of a connexion between sin and punishment. And this is more the case when afflictions are sudden, and unlooked for, and great, and repeated, or have any thing that looks peculiar in them. And even good minds have not been able always to resist such impressions and conclusions. Gideon said, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us?" And the pious widow of Zarephath, upon the loss of her child, "said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" The Poet tells us, and very truly, "Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face"—But he does *hide* it. The frown is visible enough—sense can see this; but the smile can only be apprehended by faith—and whose faith is always in exercise?

We may also remark, that gracious souls deprecate nothing so much as censure from God—Therefore they say unto God, "Do not condemn me. To any thing else I bow. But I cannot bear exclusion from thee. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee. Thy lovingkindness is better than life. In thy presence all my happiness is placed. Use the rod of a father; but let me not feel the sentence of the judge. Correct me; but do not abandon me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

Yes, nothing can relieve the gloom of a follower of God, but the light of his countenance—Nothing can make melody in his troubled conscience, but the sound, Go in peace; thy sins be forgiven thee. O seek such an assurance of Divine favour before the evil days come, wherein you will say, we have no pleasure in them! If trouble—and man is born to it as the sparks fly upward: if trouble—and you

are not for a moment secure—should fall upon you before you have a good hope, through grace, that God is pacified towards you; your condition will be the most pitiable. You must either stupify the mind with the Devil's opiates, or faint in the day of adversity.

And let those who have it, preserve and cherish this sense of Divine favour and acceptance. Beware of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Beware, not only of sin; but of the world. Beware of sloth and sleep. Christian slept, and lost his roll out of his bosom. And while Saul slept, he was deprived of his spear and his cruse. When trouble comes, you should not have to seek what, above all things, you want—immediately to use. Without his smiles, even in prosperity, your comforts will not cheer you—but in adversity, without his approbation, how heavily will every stroke fall! and how deeply will every wound be felt!

Let me know always that he is near that justifieth me; that all is well with my soul and for eternity; that he will support me under my burden; that though he afflicts me, he loves me—and afflicts me *because* he loves me. And I will sing—

"Trials must and will befall:
"But, with humble faith to see
"Love inscrib'd upon them all,
"This is happiness to me."

DEC. 15.—"*The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them.*" Rev. vii. 17.

— THE Lamb—This is an application given the Lord Jesus, for two reasons—The one alluding to his personal qualities; such as purity, innocency, gentleness, meekness, patience—for he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. The other, in reference to the design of his death. Abel offered to God a firstling

of the flock. Familiar with the use of such a victim, Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Under the Law, a lamb was offered every morning and every evening; and on the Sabbath-day, two were offered in the morning, and two in the evening. There was also the Paschal-lamb, whose blood was sprinkled, and whose flesh was eaten, at the deliverance of the Jews from the Destroying Angels. And "Christ, our passover," says Paul, "is sacrificed for us." And John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" And it is worthy of our observation, that the name is applied to him, not only in his abasement, but in his exaltation; and that, no less than twenty-eight times, is he called the Lamb, in this Book of the Revelation!

— His glory is much spoken of in the Scripture, but never in stronger language than here—"The Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne"—a station of dignity, dominion, government, full supremacy. Surely, if the Sacred Writers intended to intimate, that he was a mere creature only, they have expressed themselves in a manner very unguarded and ensnaring.—Well; there he is—not only near the Throne, but in it—and in the midst of it; in spite of all opposition—Let his enemies tremble, and bewail. They may make war with the Lamb; but the Lamb will overcome them: for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. But let his followers boldly profess him—Why should they be ashamed of a leader that is in the midst of the Throne? And why do they not rejoice in his salvation? Surely they must, if they love him—for love always exults in the prosperity of its object. Surely every feeling of their heart must prompt the desire—

"Let him be crown'd with majesty,
"That bow'd his head to death;
"And be his honours sounded high,
"By all things that have breath."

Well; there he is, in the possession of all power in heaven and in earth—able to save them; to preserve them; to make all things work together for their good.

— And as is his greatness, so is his condescension and kindness. The Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne "shall feed them." The imagery is pastoral. His people are held forth as sheep; and he performs the office of a shepherd. His concern with them begins here. He seeks after them when lost; and brings them to his fold; and furnishes them with supplies. They can rely on the extensiveness of his care, and the continuance of it; and may individually say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want—

> 'While he affords his aid,
> 'I cannot yield to fear:
> 'Though I should walk through Death's dark shade,
> 'My Shepherd's with me there.'"

Nor is this all. When they shall come out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—when they shall be before the Throne, and serve Him day and night in his Temple—then—even then, he shall feed them—not, as now, by ministers and ordinances; but immediately—not, as now, in the wilderness; but in the heavenly Canaan—not, as now, surrounded with enemies; but where all shall be quietness and assurance for ever.—The Lamb shall feed them. He shall be the dispenser, and the source of their happiness. It will flow from his presence and communications—Therefore, Paul desired to depart, to be with Christ, which was far better—"*He* that sitteth on the Throne shall *dwell among them.* They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: FOR the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living

fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

Poor Burns! This is the representation of heaven, which, he says, he could never read, from a child, without tears. Oh! let me not admire the description only, but seek after the enjoyment of the blessedness. The language is pathetic, and the scenery is inviting—but is the subject itself more interesting than either? I must be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. I cannot hope to attain hereafter, what I do not desire and delight in now. A natural man may long for a heaven of release from toil and pain—Do I, O my soul, prize a heaven of which Christ is—all in all?

DEC. 16.—"*And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.*" 1 Sam. xxiii. 16.

WE here see, in the experience of David, that the most eminent of God's people may need encouragement. He was now dejected and dismayed. And we learn from his complaints, in the Book of Psalms, that he was frequently the subject of depression. And to which of the saints recorded in the Scripture can we turn, whose hands never hung down, whose knees never trembled? *These*, we are prone to consider as peculiar in their religious attainments; but *they* also were only enlightened and sanctified in part. They also had in them nature, as well as grace. They, too, were men of like passions with us, and compassed with infirmities. All those perfect beings now before the Throne, were previously in a vale of tears; the spirit indeed willing, but the flesh

weak; sometimes rejoicing in God their Saviour; but sometimes saying, "I am cast out of his sight."

"Once they were mourning here below,
"And wet their couch with tears;
"They wrestled hard, as we do now,
"With sins, and doubts, and fears."

In the conduct of Jonathan, we see the duty of real friendship. A friend is born for adversity: and "to him that is afflicted, pity should be shewn from his friend." This, however, is not always the case. Many pretenders fail when the day of trial comes; and he who relied upon their attendance, and sympathy, and succour, in trouble, finds his confidence, as Solomon expresses it, "like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint." Yet let us not say in our haste, all men are liars. See Jonathan, a young prince—surrounded with every indulgence—undertaking, without application, to repair to David—to see and serve his friend at the hazard of his life.

— In the relief derived from this visit, we learn the advantage of pious intercourse. "Come," said Jonathan, "Come, David, remember God's promise. Is it not faithful and true? Think of the anointing oil Samuel poured upon thy head—Can this be in vain? Who enabled thee to conquer Goliath? Who delivered thee from the paw of the lion and the bear? He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. He saveth, by his right hand, them that put their trust in him, from them that rise up against them. He keeps them as the apple of the eye—Encourage thyself in the Lord thy God."—The address availed—"He strengthened his hand in God." We have a similar instance in the experience of Paul. He had appealed unto Cæsar, and was now approaching the scene of his trial; and his heart was cast down within him—but the brethren from Rome came down as far as Appii Forum to meet him: "whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." "Two

are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: "but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to lift him up." Who, when dull, has not found a Christian visiter a quickening spirit? "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." Who, in sadness and gloom, has not found refreshment and delight from godly communion? Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel. Who, like Hagar, has not sometimes been ready to expire with thirst, till some ministering spirit has opened his eyes, and shewn him a well?

—And who does not perceive, in the strange circumstances of this consolation, that God can never be at a loss to comfort his followers? He knows, not only how to deliver the godly out of temptation, but to cheer them in it—He is called the God of all comfort. David was now in a state of concealment. Of the few that were with him, no one perhaps knew the state of his mind—for good men, from their regard for the honour of religion, are not always at liberty to lay open many of their distressful feelings. But his God knew what he now suffered; and what his frame of mind required—And what was the instrument He employed? Jonathan: "Saul's son," as it is added—and wisely added. The son of David's bitterest foe. The son, too, that was interested in David's destruction. He was the heir-apparent; and *he* comforts the man who was going to fill a throne, which, by the law of succession, belonged to himself! How wonderful was this! How obviously the work of God! All hearts are in his hand, and he can turn them as he pleases. It is he that gives us favour in the eyes of others; and he can raise us up helpers and friends as unlikely to aid us, as the ravens were to feed Elijah.—Many a situation also, the most improbable, has been made, by

his communications, none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven: and, filled with surprise, we have exclaimed, with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not!" When are we inaccessible to him? "From the end of the earth," said David, "will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed"—And no wonder—he remembered that Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and came to him *into the wood*, and strengthened his hand in God. Did he never come to you in a similar condition? "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence; and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope."

DEC. 17.—"*And a certain Scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*"
Matt. viii. 19, 20.

THE God of this world deludes his followers. He conceals from them every difficulty and danger to which they are exposed in his service; and raises in them expectations, which he knows will never be fulfilled—Like Jael, he welcomes in, and spreads the couch, and brings forth butter in a lordly dish—but keeps out of sight the hammer and the nails. Take a man, whose object is to gain a name, to become a leader, and to draw away disciples after him—he courts popularity; he flatters; he employs any means; and he accommodates himself to every dis-

position, as far as he can, without risking discovery. But it was far otherwise with the founder of Christianity. His character was as original as it was excellent. His kingdom was not of this world. His professed object was, to instruct, and save, and bless—and no selfish aim was hidden under it. He shewed, in his own person, how little his followers were to mind earthly things: and, in dealing with those who came to him, we see that it was not his concern to draw unprincipled crowds into his train. He would form a peculiar people, who should be actuated by the noblest convictions and purposes. He therefore, in order to discriminate, applied a test—he warned them to sit down first, and count the cost; and assured them at once, that if any man would be his disciple, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and forsake all that he had.

— Our Lord now "saw great multitudes about him;" so that "he gave commandment to depart unto the other side"—But as, in the midst of all these, he was stepping towards the ship, "a certain Scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." A noble resolution, if it had been made from a good motive. But he apprehended our Saviour to be a temporal Messiah, who, as he appeared able, from his miracle, to carry every thing before him, would soon have promotions at his disposal; and he hoped to gain some of the loaves and fishes. Our Lord well knew his thoughts; and said unto him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head—What say you now?" It is easy to determine what would have been his reply, if he had been sincere and earnest in his application. "O Lord, I come, not to prescribe, but to resign myself entirely to thee. Every thing appears to me less than nothing and vanity, compared with the salvation of my soul;

nd if, by any means, I can attain it, I shall be atisfied. Whatever—dear and useful as I have eemed it, I cannot retain in following thee, I heerfully give up. All I fear is, separation from ıyself—Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return om following after thee—Lord, I will follow thee) prison and to death." But, alas! his mean and ıercenary temper was now detected. We hear no ıore of him—he left him; having loved this present orld.

But the narrative is recorded for our admonition: nd the fact, which, by way of trial, our Saviour ddressed to this pretender, is worthy of our atten- ion. It is very affecting and instructive—It is the ıdigence of Jesus, appearing in the homelessness f his condition. This, as a part, is put for the hole of his abasement: and it is held forth, en- anced, by contrast. The inferior creatures have wellings convenient for them, in which they secure hemselves, and enjoy repose, and breed up their oung. Some of these, man takes, as inmates, under is own roof: such are, the faithful dog, and the eathered songster in the cage. He furnishes also, helter, as well as provender, for his cattle. But nimals that live at large, have also accommodations uited to their kinds. "Foxes have holes." "The oung lions gather themselves together, and lay hem down in their dens." "The high hills are a efuge for the goats, and the rocks for the conies." The spider taketh hold with her hand, and is in ings' palaces." "The birds of the air have nests." The eagle mounts up, and," in rocks inaccessible, maketh her nest on high." "As for the stork, he fir-trees are her house." Some build on the round; some, in dense thickets; some, in boughs, lepending over the flood; some, in isles, secured by vater. Some repair to the habitations of men: there he sparrow finds a house, and the swallow a nest for erself, where she may lay her young. And who,

in all this, can help admiring the wisdom and kindness of Providence? His tender mercies are over all his works. As he made all, so he careth for them. He giveth them their meat in due season. He furnishes them with their powers of defence, or flight; and actuates the skill they display in all their surprising economies. And will he disregard his rational offspring? He teacheth *them* more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh them wiser than the fowls of the air. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. How superior is reason, to instinct! How boundless in improvement, is human ingenuity! What abodes has it provided for us! And with what conveniences, comforts, pleasures, has it replenished them! From hence, springs the idea of *home*. We cleave to a place where we received our birth, passed the days of infancy, indulged in the sports of youth; where sleep has refreshed our wearied bodies; and where we have smiled at the descending storm, and the piercing cold.

" .... Home is
" The lov'd retreat of peace and plenty; where,
" Supporting and supported, polished friends
" And dear relations meet, and mingle into bliss."

Well may the same poet represent the man returning at eve, buried in the drifted snow, "Stung with the thoughts of home."

A homeless condition, therefore, is the most pitiable. And was this the condition of the Lord Jesus? Not absolutely. During his private life, he lived with Joseph and Mary, at Nazareth. And after he entered on his public ministry, he had friends, who, like Martha, gladly afforded him the accommodations of their own dwellings. But these advantages were occasional; and were of the nature of hospitality. He never possessed a habitation or an apartment he could call his own. He was born in another

man's house—and this was a stable—and he was laid in a manger. How often, when my children were about me, have I said, while viewing my sleeping babe—

"How much better thou art attended
"Than the Son of God could be,
"When from heaven he descended,
"And became a child like thee!

"Soft and easy is thy cradle—
"Coarse and hard the Saviour lay,
"When his birth-place was a stable,
"And his softest bed was hay!"

How soon was he driven an infant-exile into Egypt! Widows ministered to him of their substance. Wearied with his journey, he sat on the well, and said to the woman, Give me to drink. A fish furnished him with money to pay the Temple tribute. One night, he slept in a fishing-boat. Another, he continued all night in prayer in a mountain. We read only once of his riding—though he went about doing good; and this was upon a borrowed ass—and a colt, the foal of an ass. He partook of the last Passover in a borrowed chamber—And he was wrapped in linen, not his own, when taken down from the Cross—and was buried in another man's garden, and another man's tomb! What does all this teach us?

DEC. 18.—"*And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*"
Matt. viii. 20.

THE fact is affecting; but is it not instructive, too?
— We may take from it a standard, by which

to judge of the age and country in which he appeared. Nothing reflects more upon a people, than suffering characters, distinguished by the greatest goodness and usefulness, to want. It will always be a reproach to the Corinthian converts that they allowed such a man as Paul, while preaching and working miracles among them, to work night and day at tent-making. But we love and commend the Philippians, who once and again, when he was in Thessalonica, sent to his necessity.—Surely we should have said, men will reverence God's Son. At his coming, nobles and princes will offer their mansions and palaces—What preparations are made to receive a superior! Yet the honour of the visit is deemed a recompence for the trouble and expence. But *he* was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not. What is man? Let Judæa furnish an answer. See the Lord of all; the friend of misery; possessed of every moral perfection; the image of the invisible God—yet not having "where to lay his head!!" But is human nature the same now? Some censure others, and think well of themselves merely because they have not been tried by the same circumstances. "Oh! had we been then living there, he should not have been destitute of any accommodation we could have yielded him." Yet you follow the multitude—and the reproach of a name will keep you from owning his truth—and you are backward in giving, in the support of his cause. But, by the disposition which you exercise towards his Gospel, and house, and ministers, and members, he judges of his attachment or indifference to himself—He that receiveth you, receiveth me—Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me—Depart.

— Pause, and admire the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though he was rich, yet for our

sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Do not imagine that he did not *feel* his condition. He was really a partaker of flesh and blood; and knew the sensations of hunger, and weariness, and cold, as well as any other man. But the conveniences and comforts which he required, he often found not. Think of his preaching and travelling all the livelong day; and at night not having where to lay his head! The sensibility of his condition was enhanced by his former state of dignity and enjoyment. We are therefore more affected when we see a prince reduced, than when we behold an individual suffering who was always indigent. Jesus was higher than the kings of the earth, and had given them all their thrones. Heaven had been his dwelling-place: and all the angels his attendants; and adorers, too. What condescension was here!—Let us remember that he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant—There was no compulsion—it was all voluntary.—And not for himself, but for us. And did we deserve such an interposition; such an expensiveness of sacrifice for our comfort? We were viler than the earth—we were enemies by wicked works.—Yet he never repented of his engagement; but said, as he was entering all this abasement, Lo! I come! I delight to do thy will! And as his agony approached, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" It was therefore, as the Apostle calls it, Grace—grace the most free and unparalleled. And shall not this love, which passeth knowledge, fix our minds, and fill our hearts? Where is our gratitude, unless we are willing to deny ourselves for him, and to walk worthy of such a Divine Benefactor unto all well-pleasing? The lower he descended to save me, the higher shall he rise in my esteem for ever. He is always, and altogether lovely; but never so adorable as when his face is marred

more than any man's; and he has not where to lay his head.

—Let us also learn not to judge of worth by external advantages. True greatness is personal; and does not depend on power, titles, or wealth. Is a man the more valued of God, because he has a larger field or a longer purse than his neighbour? Does it give him more virtue, or understanding? A fool, a child of the Devil, may be set on the high places of the earth; while the Apostles were hungry and naked; and the Son of God had not where to lay his head. While we view him who is higher than the heavens in such an estate, let us learn the vanity of worldly distinctions. Let us see how absurd it is to pride ourselves in a fine house, and splendid furniture, or any of the meanness of the pride of life. Let us despise ourselves, if we have esteemed a man the more for the gold ring and gay clothing; or regarded the poor the less, because he is poor: and remember, that if we had lived in Judæa, we should have courted Pontius Pilate, and shunned Jesus Christ.

— Let the Lord's poor take this truth, and apply it, to produce resignation under the privations of life. You talk of penury—but he *was* poor. You have many a comfort you can call your own—but he had not a place where to lay his head.—But allowing that your trials were much greater than they are; remember—this is not your rest—and you are rich in faith—and have the honour of conformity to the Lord Jesus. You only know the fellowship of his sufferings. Is it not enough that the servant be as his Master, and the disciple as his Lord? Can the common soldier complain, when he sees the commander-in-chief sharing the same hardships with himself?

— Let it lead us to rejoice in the Saviour's present condition. He that descended, is the same also that ascended. He who was crowned with thorns,

is crowned with glory and honour. He who had not where to lay his head, has all power in heaven and in earth. How delightful is this assurance to those who love him! for love glories in the exaltation of its object. It is also interesting to their hopes. They are one with him. And because he lives, they shall live also.

DEC. 19.—"*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia: this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.*" Psalm lxxxvii. 4, 5.

THE Jews, partly from their ignorance, and partly from their aversion to Christianity, strangely pervert this passage. They contend that it is designed to intimate, that while other places would produce only now and then a man of note, Jerusalem should abound with all kinds of illustrious characters. But the meaning is this. Zion, in whose name the writer speaks, is foretelling the vocation of the Gentiles; and viewing with ecstasy the accessions that should be made to her of such as should be saved.

Observe to whom she addresses the intelligence—"I will make mention to *them that know me.*" That is, to her friends and acquaintances. To such it is natural for us to divulge any thing that is interesting and delightful; as *they* are likely to receive it without envy, and to partake of the pleasure. In the Parable, the shepherd having succeeded in his search—not only rejoices himself; but when he cometh home, calls together his neighbours and friends, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. The Church

well knew the mind of the godly, that they would not only understand such news, but that it would be to them like cold water to a thirsty soul, or as life from the dead. Thus, in the Acts, when the brethren were informed of the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles—"they glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Observe the places from which these additions should come. "I will make mention to them that know me, of *Rahab* and *Babylon:* behold *Philistia,* and *Tyre,* with *Ethiopia.*" These are parts put for the whole of the Gentile world; and they are very strikingly put. For all these had been strangers or enemies. Some of them had been her bitterest persecutors, and vilest oppressors. They were all at this time lying in wickedness, enveloped in ignorance, and enslaved to idolatry. But they should cast away their idols; and, beholding the glory of the Church, abandon their enmity, and take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

— Mark the change they should experience. "This man was *born there.* And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was *born there.*" They were born, naturally, in Egypt, Philistia, Tyre, and Babylon: but they were to be born, morally, in Zion; by the Word and Spirit of God. They should become new creatures—They should undergo such a conversion in their minds, and hearts, and lives, as should constitute a new birth. For every subject of Divine grace is "born again." And this is properly the date of our existence—We have not lived a moment longer than we have lived "the life of God." "Ye *must* be born again."

By this, therefore, we are to judge whether we are children of Zion, and may rejoice in her King. If we have experienced this change, we are written among the living in Jerusalem. We are enrolled; and though once aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, we shall be regarded as citizens, and have all the honour and advantage of natives: "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was *born* there."

It was formerly deemed a most enviable privilege to be free of some royal and distinguished city. But what was a citizen of Babylon, or of Rome, compared with a denizen of Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem? Yea, were you an apostle, officially considered only; could you prophesy, and work miracles, and raise the dead; and the Saviour met you, elated with your endowments, he would say—"In this rejoice not, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

DEC. 20.—"*What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?*" John xi. 56.

THIS was the language of many of the Jews, who had ascended from the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves against the Passover. It is not easy, or perhaps possible, to determine the principle from which the words were uttered.—Perhaps malice uttered them; and they came from persons who wished to discover and apprehend him: for "both the Chief Priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him."—Perhaps curiosity uttered them; and they came from persons who were anxious to see whether he had

courage enough to appear in public, after the threatening of the Rulers. Besides this, he was a very extraordinary character, the fame of whose miracles and preaching had spread far and wide; and they naturally desired to see a personage of whom they had heard so much.—Perhaps affection uttered them. For, though he was generally despised and rejected of men, there were some who knew his value, and believed him to be the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. They therefore longed for the pleasure, and honour, and advantage, of an interview with him at the approaching solemnity. And this is the principle from which, if partakers of Divine grace, we are seeking for Jesus. "For Christ our passover," says the Apostle, "is sacrificed for us—Let us therefore keep the feast." And it is in reference to the communion of his body and blood, to which we are going to repair, that we issue the enquiry—"What think ye—that he will not come to the feast?"

This is above every thing desirable. Ordinances are not beneficial, necessarily and of themselves. They derive all their excellency and influence from Him. A truth we learn, not only from Scripture, but experience. What a difference, as to light, and life, and joy, do we feel in the same ordinance—when he is absent or present! This is nothing to a formalist. *He* is satisfied with the outward signs, and the service itself. But, as to the Christian, intercourse with Christ is the one thing needful. He feels it pleasing to hold communion with the saints: but what he principally wants is fellowship with the Saviour—He alone can fill them all: and without him, they would have nothing for each other, or for themselves.

But the enquiry implies doubt. Doubt, has two aspects and bearings—the unlikely, and the probable—the one exciting fear, and the other encouraging hope. Let us look at each.

— What is there, then, to awaken our suspicion and fear, that he will *not* be at the feast? And is there not much every way? Without going back to our unconverted days—how have we lived since we have made a profession of his Name? Have we walked as those who are not of the world? Have we borne His corrections without murmuring? Have we been grateful under his mercies? Has he lived in our warmest thoughts? Has he been the chief theme of our conversation? Have we not frequently been ashamed of his cause? Have we recommended him earnestly to others?—After all this—how can we expect that he will honour us with his company? Should *we* thus honour any fellow-creature, who had treated us, as we have treated him? But the cause of alarm is increased, when we consider, not only our conduct at large, but our behaviour towards him—with regard to this very feast itself? Have we not suffered trifling excuses to keep us away; when he has been there waiting for us; but waiting in vain? Have we not approached it with the indifference of custom and formality; though angels were there intensely desiring to look into these things? Have we not passed through the divine memorials, mystically eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God, with the exercise of no more faith in his death, or love to our brethren, than in an ordinary meal?—We need not go on. O blessed Jesus! when we consider all this—and this *only*—we may well question whether thou wilt—ever meet with us again.

— But let us look at the other side. Let us see, not only what there is to excite fear, but to encourage hope. Now to induce us to conclude that he will be at the feast—We have his character, his disposition—"His heart is made of tenderness; his bowels melt with love"—"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." We have

his past dealings with us—He has tried us, but not forsaken us—We have been often cast down, but never cast off. We have his promise—"Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." In a word, we are sure of the blessing, if we seek it—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

But is it possible to ascertain when he is with us at the feast? It is. As he is not there corporeally, we cannot apprehend him with our bodily senses. But, as he is there spiritually, we may apprehend him spiritually. They who are new creatures, have new senses, which are exercised to discern both good and evil. They have ears to hear his voice. They have eyes to see his glory. They have a holy taste, and holy feelings. Thus his people can be sensible of his arrival. Indeed, he *says*, "I am come." He is not inactive when there—"While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof"—

> "And faith, and love, and joy, appear;
> "And every grace is active here."

There are impressions and effects which cannot be mistaken, owing to their holy, humbling, heavenly, influence. The assurance he has of communion with the Lord in his ordinances, is not evidence for others; but to the believer himself it affords satisfaction; and he is neither to be ridiculed or reasoned out of the conviction—He has the witness in himself.

DEC. 21.—"*Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.*" Job. x. 2.

—A good man perceives, and acknowledges the hand of God in his afflictions. Job sees God contending with him. Though his sufferings were prin-

cipally from creatures, he said, "The Lord hath taken away." "Thou hast taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces." Whatever may form the twigs of the rod, God is the chastiser—He has a right to correct, and can never err in using it. To realize this, is the way, not only to prevent despondency, but to repress all murmuring passions. This satisfied Eli: "It is the Lord, let *him* do what seemeth him good." "Oh!" says the gardener, as he passes down the walks, and is priding himself on the beds and borders which he has so carefully cultivated; "who removed that plant? who gathered this flower?" His fellow-servant says, "The master" —and he is dumb, and opens not his mouth, because *he* did it.

— Again—God has an end to answer by his contention with us. It is not the display of his sovereignty. There is a distinction between bestowing favours, and inflicting penalties. If a judge condemned a man, to shew that he *was* a judge; or a king imprisoned a man, to shew that he *was* a king; every one would cry out against them—but they would be more than justified in employing such measures for the display of justice, and for the advantage of ensample. Paul conveys a degree of censure where we should have looked only for tenderness: The fathers of our flesh chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure. But God, says he, always does it for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Why is the ship in danger? Because Jonah has fled from the presence of the Lord; and the wind is sent after him. Why does Israel flee before the men of Ai? There is an Achan in the camp. Thus God explains the thing himself: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." He there-

fore does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There is some sin indulged; some duty neglected; some idol adored. But his aim may be, not only to rebuke for actual evil; but to hedge up our way with thorns, to keep us from the forbidden ground, towards which we were advancing; or to prune us, as vines, that we may bring forth more fruit.

— God alone can discover his own intentions in his rebukes. But, in doing this, we are not to suppose that he will employ miracles; or speak in an audible voice from heaven; or by a sudden impulse. He acts in a way suited to the nature and improvement of a rational and moral being. He may, therefore, in shewing us his design, use even an enemy. When Shimei cursed David, David considered him as much sent of God to reprove him, as Nathan had been. The will of God may be made known by the admonitions of a pious friend, who sees what we overlook, from habit, or self-love. We should therefore be thankful when the righteous smite us; and not deem them enemies because they tell us the truth. Sometimes the nature and circumstances of the affliction itself proclaim the secret; and we can see the cause in the effect; the sin in the punishment. The faithful word, read or preached, comes home to our case: and conscience cries, Thou art the man. Sometimes the difficulty of discovery is great. But if we address ourselves to the Father of lights, sincerely and importunately, to shew us wherefore he contendeth with us, we shall not seek him in vain; but the promise given to Jeremiah shall be fulfilled in us: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

— And very desirable it is that we should know why He contendeth with us. Indeed a good man cannot be satisfied without it. For while the wicked are only anxious to escape from trouble, he wishes to profit by it. He desires this knowledge,

therefore, not to gratify curiosity; but to enable him to justify God in his dispensations—and to know how to pray—and to exercise the graces of the condition he is in—and to apply to present duty—and that he may confess whatever is wrong, and watch against it in future: saying, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." For there is a tenderness in the conscience of a renewed man that readily responds to God—No sooner did our Lord turn and look upon Peter, than he went out and wept bitterly.

As for an unconverted man to ask God, in his affliction, to shew wherefore he contends with *him*, it is absurd. It would defeat the end of his suffering, which is not to make him leave a particular sin—but all sin; and to draw him into a new course, and a new state.

But perhaps, though living in sin, you say, God is not contending with you. So much the worse. He is saying, "They are joined to idols; let them alone." Though he spares you now, he will deal with you hereafter. And the longer the arrear, the severer the reckoning. "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

DEC. 22.—"*And call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable.*" Isaiah lviii. 13.

THIS is to characterize the heirs of an exceeding great and precious promise here subjoined. They are to be known, not by their observance of the Lord's day only; but by their endeared and exalted regard for it—They call the Sabbath a delight; and the holy of the Lord, honourable. And what reason

they have for this, will appear, from its leading aspects and bearings.

Let us connect it with the brute creation. Any thing that tends to make them happier, will be pleasing to a benevolent mind; especially since we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain; and was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Though man is the lord of this lower world, and all creatures are put under his dominion; he is not to oppress and enslave them. If his power over them be abused, and his tender mercies towards them be cruel, God will resent it—these helpless beings are his creatures, and his care—I love to hear him telling the fretful Prophet, as a reason why he spared Nineveh, that there were in it, not only "more than threescore and six thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left;" but "also much cattle." I love to hear him forbidding the Jewish husbandman to muzzle the ox while treading out the corn. I love to read the tenderness of the Fourth Commandment—"That thine ox and thine ass may rest, as well as thou." If the brutes had reason, they would all bless God for the Sabbath.

We may view the Sabbath in reference to the business of life. In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread, till thou return to the dust, was the sentence passed upon man for sin: but, in judgment, God remembers mercy. Who could bear incessant application and toil? Some change is obviously wanting, to unbend the mind and the body. And man goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening; when he returns home, and retires to rest; and *his* sleep is sweet, whether he eats little or much. But this is not all. The Sabbath furnishes a fixed pause; a needful relaxation. Those who are in easy circumstances, and, like the lilies of the field, toil not, neither do they spin, feel little interest in the Sabbath,

on this account. But let them think of thousands of their fellow-creatures. Let them think of those who, by mental pursuits and professional engagements, get their bread by the sweat of the brain. Let them think of those that sit at the loom, stand at the forge, work in the field, drudge under ground. What a relief, what a privilege, is one day in seven, felt by them? How dull would be the monotony of their time, without the break and variety of the Sabbath! What a drag would their life be, if they were to carry their loads unloosened even to the grave! But the day of repose returns—the worn labourer lays down his burden; stretches his limbs; refreshes himself by cleanliness and change of raiment; and after six days, during which he is almost reduced to the brute, on the seventh he feels himself to be a man. And, O ye rigid, if not sanctimonious souls, envy not the sons and daughters of drudgery and confinement a little of the fresh air of heaven, which you, perhaps, can always breathe! nor be too severe with those who only once a week can look forth, and glance on the beauties of Nature—the works, too, of Him who ordained the Sabbath!

This day also contributes to the harmony of families. The members may be much divided and dispersed through the week, and have few or slender opportunities of social intercourse. But the Sabbath brings them more fully together; and produces and cherishes those feelings which endear and unite them relatively; and dispose them, by love, to serve one another. Persons and families are—especially among the common people, always unkind, and rude, and savage, both in their temper and manners, where the Sabbath is neglected. But they are respectful, and humane, and tender, where it is observed; because they see each other to advantage, and mingle under moral and religious impressions, which, though not always powerful enough to sanctify, contribute to soften and civilize.

The Sabbath is also a period of devotion and reflection. If we are godly, we shall not go through the week without God. Some pious thoughts and feelings will blend with all our busy concerns. But week days are, in a sense, worldly ones; and even our allowed contact with earthly things, tends to impair our heavenly impressions, and to make us forgetful of our highest good. We want a day of retreat from this world, that we may think of another, and have opportunities to compare the claims of the objects that court our hearts. We want a day of silence from the passions, to consider more deeply the principles and motives of religion; and to have excited, and carried upward, those affections which cleave unto the dust. To a man concerned to advance in the Divine life, how welcome is the return of a day, all for his soul and eternity! in which, by waiting on the Lord, his strength is renewed, and his heart is enlarged; and he obtains fresh preparations to meet the temptations, the duties, and the troubles, of life.

Again: without the aid of such a day, how would even the face of religion be maintained in the community at large? We may learn from an enemy. When the French wished to destroy every thing like Christianity, they were wise enough to know how much the Sabbath stood in their way; and therefore abolished it, and established their decades. Let any one imagine the Lord's day given up for a time in our own country. The effect would be a thousand times more injurious to the interests of piety and morality, than all the writings and attempts of infidelity. Let this fence of every thing sacred and useful be broken down, and what an inundation of ignorance and vice of every kind would overspread the land! It is in the services of this day, the rich and the great are reminded of their accountableness; their dependence on God; and their being only on a level with those below them, in their origin and end.

This they are too prone to forget: but once in the week, the master is a servant; the king, a subject; the judge, a criminal, crying for mercy. And as to the poor and working classes, how little time have they for religious exercises, but the Sabbath! It is then, principally, the Bible is taken down from the shelf; and the child, placed between the knees, is heard to read it. Then the children of our Sunday schools cry Hosannas in our temples. Then the family goes to the house of God in company. Then the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; and the common people (unless the preacher misrepresents him) again hear the Saviour gladly. How, without these auxiliaries, would a sense of the Divine Presence, and the moral providence of God, and of a future state, be kept alive on the minds of the multitude? Is not all the knowledge of religion thousands possess, derived from what they read and hear on the Sunday?

And how impressive and interesting is the Sabbath, as the chief period of Divine operations! How distinguished will it be in the annals of eternity! How many thousands, how many millions, on this day, have been awakened, enlightened, converted, made new creatures! What triumphs has the Cross gained over the powers of darkness! What noble schemes and enterprizes, for the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind, have taken their rise, from some impression in the closet, or excitement in the Church, on this accepted time, this day of salvation!

Nor is it less delightful and honourable, as an emblem of heaven, and a preparation for it. Philip Henry would often say, at the close of his Sabbath devotions—Well; if this be not heaven, it must be the way to it. Yes; it is then Christians often feel themselves, like Jacob in his vision, at the gate. They have earnests and foretastes of the glory to be revealed. Perhaps they are never so willing as then, to go. Many of them have wished to be released on this day; and some have been gratified. But if they

do not leave on the earthly Sabbath, they enter on the heavenly one. For there remaineth a rest, a sabbatising, as the word is, to the people of God. And what an exchange, for the better! Here we worship with a few; and these, like ourselves, are imperfect. Here we groan, being burdened; and if we are not weary of our divine work, we are soon wearied in it. And, when—satisfied with favour, and filled with the blessing of the Lord, we can say,

"My willing soul would stay
"In such a frame as this;"

the world calls us down, and leads us out into its cares, and griefs, and dangers, again. Oh! why do we not sing—

"Thy earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love;
"But there's a nobler rest above:
"To that our lab'ring souls aspire,
"With ardent pangs and strong desire.

"No more fatigue, no more distress,
"Nor sin, nor hell, shall reach the place;
"No groans to mingle with the songs
"That warble from immortal tongues.

"O long-expected day! begin;
"Dawn on these realms of woe and sin:
"Fain would we leave this weary load,
"And sleep in death, to rest with God!"

DEC. 23.—"*As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.*" Psalm lxxxvii. 7.

THIS is spoken of Zion; and shews us the *joy*, and the *attachment*, of her inhabitants.

The joy is expressed in language according with the forms of service in the Jewish worship. They had, in addition to the praises of individuals and families, orders of men, established expressly for the

performance of psalmody in the Temple: some vocal, and some instrumental—"As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there." The meaning is—that Zion, which the world considers the metropolis of sadness and gloom, should be the residence of cheerfulness and mirth; or, in other words, that the Church of God should abound with spiritual joy and gladness. This joy may be considered two ways. First, as promised: and so it is to be viewed as a privilege; and we are to look after it in the history and experience of his people. And if we turn—and this is the fairest way—to those whom God has himself described in his Word, we shall find them distinguished by nothing more than this experience—They walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Though they had losses and afflictions, yet, believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Secondly, as commanded. Thus they are enjoined to shout aloud for joy; to rejoice in the Lord always; to be filled with the Spirit; speaking to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord. And thus it becomes a duty: and, as such, we are bound to seek and to preserve it—to study the grounds of it—to guard against every thing that would invade and injure it—to endeavour, by all means, to increase our joy in the Lord—and never *refuse* to be comforted. All must be singers and players on instruments here—All cannot perform equally well; but all must do something—and pray and strive, to shew that the religion of Christ is able to make its possessors happy; that it can set their roving hearts at rest; that it can enable them to dispense with the dissipations of the world; that it can sustain them under the trials of life, and raise them above the fears of death—and thus adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

But here is attachment, as well as joy—"All my

springs are in thee." No affection was ever more sincere than that which the pious Jews bore to their native land. Jerusalem was the source of their hope and glory; the circle and the centre of all the endearments of life. They breathed out their very soul when they said, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." They deemed nothing too dear to be parted with, for its ornament or defence. In its welfare, they forgot their personal and relative sorrows: and when it was taken, and destroyed, they abandoned themselves to grief, hung their harps upon the willows, and felt life a burden. Even in its reduced state, they took "pleasure in her stones, and favoured the dust thereof"—Each of them sighing, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And is there less intenseness of regard in Christians, towards Jerusalem which is above, and free, and the mother of us all? No—all their springs are there—All that refreshes me—can each of them say; all that revives, all that enlivens, all that inspires—"all my springs are in thee."

Where are all the springs of a worldly man? In the world. To all his interests there, he is alive: his heart is glad when his corn and wine increase; and his joy fails with them. His losses are the taking away of his gods—and what has he more? But what is the experience of the Christian? In the word of God, and the ordinances of his house, and communion with his people, and the consolations of his Spirit—here it is, says he, I find my Heaven! If this cannot touch and animate him, nothing, for the time, can—On the other hand, this can make him joyful, even in tribulation. This seems to indemnify him under every earthly disappointment. What is it, says he, that my schemes fail, if His flourish? Yea, in spiritual darkness, and

when he is ready to conclude that he has no part or lot in the matter, and that his heart cannot be right in the sight of God; his countenance is illumined, and the tear of joy starts into his eye—when he hears, that the word of the Lord hath free course and is glorified—that sinners are fleeing to the Saviour, as doves to their windows—that the order to Zion is issued, Enlarge the place of thy tent; lengthen her cords, strengthen her stakes—In this, says he, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.—And so, when there are apostacies and backslidings, and professors cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, he is "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is his burden." And his fear, as well as his hope, and his grief, as well as his pleasure, shew where the attraction of his heart lies. And if any thing is to be done for Zion, he feels a courage that is not natural to him. His tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. His hand gets unawares into his pocket; and, to his power, yea, and beyond his power, he is willing to communicate; and his zeal, as well as all his other feelings, justify his saying, "All my springs are in thee."

DEC. 24.—"*Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" Luke i. 78, 79.

WELL, said David, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" He does this in a thousand ways; and each of us may acknowledge, with Job, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." But what a visit is here!

Twice does Zacharias, under different allusions, expressly mention it in his thanksgiving song. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Observe the image under which he views the coming of the Saviour—"The dayspring from on high." The springing of the day is produced, and only can be produced, by the rising of the sun. There is only one sun in nature. And there is only one Sun in grace. And to them that fear my Name, said God, by the Prophet Malachi, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

— See the state in which he finds us—"Sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." Darkness is ignorance. Some ignorance is of little importance: but here we are destroyed for lack of knowledge. The darkness is connected with the shadow of death—a state of terror, and danger, and nearness to perdition; for the shadow cannot be far from the reality. It is not only vain, but injurious, to deny the truth of this representation. Every thing concurs to prove it. And, without the admission of it, Christianity must be needless and absurd.

But see the benefit he is designed to communicate—"To give light" to them that are in darkness and the shadow of death. Accordingly, his coming has shed a lustre upon every subject interesting to our duty and welfare. So that every individual under the Gospel knows far more than all the Heathen philosophers put together. And also far more than the most illuminated among the Jews. Hence our Saviour "turned unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many pro-

phets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." It is therefore called, not only "the true light;" but, "a great light." It has two properties. It is *practical.* It is "to guide our feet." We were "sitting" before; inactive, like persons in the dark, and afraid to move: but when the light comes, we are set in motion. The doctrine of Christ is not a mere speculation. He that receives it feels an influence resembling that of the orb of day; which is vital, as well as enlightening—He walks in the Spirit. In the fear of the Lord. In the truth. It is also *blessed.* It is to guide our feet "into the path of peace." There is something very pleasing in the word Peace, as it intends reconciliation; and especially reconciliation with God. And God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace is essential to every other blessing; and every other blessing is sure to follow it. The word, therefore, is often used for every kind of good and of happiness. It is finely expressed by the Apostle, "We who have believed do enter into rest:" and yet more fully by David, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy Name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted."

But what is the source of all this blessedness? "The tender mercy of our God." As we are guilty and condemned creatures, every gift we enjoy must be from mercy. This is true, of our daily and outward comforts; and therefore Jacob calls them all "mercies;" and acknowledges that he is not worthy of the "least" of them. How true is it,

then, that—not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us!—Neither are we to imagine, that God was made merciful by the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. It is from injudicious representations of this kind, that the enemies of the atonement are furnished with their strongest objection. In the Scripture, we are told, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. —What he requires, he provides. He would not pardon Job's friends, but through his intercession: but he prescribed his prayer for the very purpose, and accepted it—and thus we are "justified freely by his grace, *through* the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Let us bless God for this tender mercy. "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Let us improve the advantages it has afforded us; and walk as children of the light. Let us pray that his way be made known on earth, and his saving health among all nations.

DEC. 25.—"*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*" Luke ii. 1—6.

THE birth of Christ is so wonderful and important, that every circumstance attending it is worthy of our attention, and capable of improvement. We are here informed of the *time*, and the *place*.

As to the *time*, it was under the reign of Augustus. Luke could not have distinguished it by a more illustrious mark, than the name of a man, the greatest prince then in the world; as he governed the Roman empire, which had extended itself over the largest and fairest portions of the inhabited earth. What is related indefinitely, is liable to dispute and mistake; whereas, particularity tends to gain credence, and renders falsehood easier of detection. Hence, the Evangelist mentions a remarkable fact attending the period: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed"—and adds—"And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Here, however, a difficulty occurs, which infidelity, alway alive to the worst of causes, and feeling the paucity and poverty of its resources, has readily laid hold of.

It must be granted that, Cyrenius, as Josephus, and all the Greek and Latin historians, agree, was not governor of Syria till eleven years after. But, first, it is supposable, that, though he was not the actual governor, he presided on this occasion, by a special commission from Augustus. This agrees with the history of the Emperor, which shews us, that, in several instances, he sent his particular friends to superintend the enrolment, without leaving it to the care of the ordinary governors of the province. Did not David do the same when he wished to number the people? There were rulers over all the tribes of Israel; yet he sent Joab, who went through all the land, and brought him the result at the end of nine months and twenty days. Secondly; Dr. Campbell renders it, "And this enrolment *first took effect* when

Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Though our version reads Taxing, it is, in the margin, Enroling. There was some difference between these. For though the registering was generally with a view to the taxing; yet the latter did not always immediately follow the former: it only laid the foundation for it, by shewing the Emperor the number and wealth of his subjects, whenever he chose to demand soldiers or money. Now, though the decree for enrolment was issued eleven years before, it was not *acted upon* till Cyrenius *was* governor of Syria; and the Roman power, on the expulsion of Archelaus from Judæa, first levied the tax on the Jewish people. We have a similar instance in our own history. William the Conqueror wished to make a survey of the kingdom. This was done in what is called the Doomsday Book, and which is still extant—it was *six years in making in England only: and no payment of taxes was made upon it till twelve years after.* Either of these solutions is perfectly satisfactory: and there is no inconsistency between them—the one does not invalidate the other. And when, to this, we add, that the fact itself was notorious; and that Luke could not be deceived, and must have known that he could not be misunderstood at the time; we see another instance of the weakness of Infidel objections. But Luke mentions this affair, not only to authenticate the truth of his narrative, but the Messiahship of Christ. His coming had not only been foretold, but the time of it. We allude to the prophetical declaration of the dying Jacob: when, speaking of Judah, he said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." That is—when he should come, the supreme power should be dislodged from their possession. And here we see the accomplishment of it: for the supreme power

ıd now fallen into the hands of Herod the Idumean, ho was exercising his vile tyranny under the favour ' the Roman sovereign, master of Syria and Palestine.

The *place* was Bethlehem. It is called the City ' David, because there David was born. But the ord City, which the Jews used so differently from ı, should not mislead us. It was only a small llage, in which nothing had occurred to aggrandize . Here he was brought forth, and not in Jerusalem, · Rome, or any other illustrious place—Was this ı intimate, that his kingdom was not of this world? 'hat cannot ennoble greatness, greatness can en- ɔble. How has the birth-place of the Mantuan Bard ɛen noticed! How many cities contended for the ɔnour of Homer's birth! The birth of Jesus in- antly drew to this village a new star, and sages om the East, and the angel of the Lord, and a ıultitude of the heavenly host; and has made it to ɛ remembered in all generations. Therefore, said ıe Prophet Micah, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, ıough thou be little among the thousands of Judah, ɛt out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is ı be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have ɛen from of old, from everlasting." That he was ı be born here, was known and expected, not only ɣ the Chief Priests and Scribes, as we see in their ıswer to Herod; but also by even the common ɛople, who argued against him, when they supposed ıat he was *not* born there—"Hath not the Scrip- ıre said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, ıd out of the town of Bethlehem, where David as?"—But let us not forget the occasion of the ɣent. For it was, humanly speaking, the most un- kely thing in the world, that Jesus should be born ɛre. For Bethlehem was not the place of Joseph's ɛsidence; but Nazareth, in Galilee. But, the decree ɛquiring that every one should repair to his own ıtrimonial city to be enrolled, Joseph, being of the ɔuse and lineage of David, goes up from Galilee,

out of the city of Nazareth, in Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, and Mary with him, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, waiting for his registry, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered! Mary thought of nothing, but accompanying Joseph. Joseph thought of nothing, but obeying the order of the Governor. The Governor thought of nothing, but the mandate of the Emperor. The Emperor only obeyed his vanity and pride: and yet all these ignorantly, but unitedly, conduced to fulfil the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. How freely men can act! and yet how necessarily! How real, and yet inexplicable, is the concord between human liberty and the certainty of events! What is contingent, where Divine veracity is concerned? How impossible is it that the Scriptures can be broken! How wonderful is the providence of God! By what methods does it conduct its plans to their completion! How easily, and yet how uncontrolably, does it bend to its pleasure all the dispositions and movements of creatures—who, like men in a boat, look one way, and row another!

DEC. 26.—"*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night: and, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.*"

Luke ii. 8, 9.

Two classes of men were led to Bethlehem, to witness the new-born Messiah—The wise men from the East, and the shepherds. The former were versed in the works of Nature. They were especially

astronomers and star-gazers: and God conducts them by a star. The latter were Jews. They had the Scriptures in their hands: and these were directed by an angel. God has various methods of manifesting himself to his creatures. But none of them are arbitrary. They all evince his "wisdom and prudence," and are adapted to the state and circumstances of the beings with whom he has to do.

Angels are all ministering spirits. And if they attend the heirs of salvation, how much more the Author of it! If they wait on the servants, how much more on the Son, who is Lord of all! When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, Yea, and let all the angels of God worship him. He was seen of angels.

— We might have expected that this glorious messenger would have been sent to persons of rank and authority—to the rulers; to the doctors of the law; to the ministers of the Sanctuary; to Herod; to the High Priest. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Man judgeth after the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh to the heart. He is no respecter of persons. The distinctions of life, which, owing to folly, are the sources of so much pride to some, and envy to others, are nothing to Him—He is equally "nigh unto *all* them that call upon him," whatever be their outward condition; as the sun shines in the valley, as well as on the hill—It was to these shepherds the angel of the Lord appeared. And may not this be considered an intimation of the persons for whom the dispensation was principally designed, and by whom it would be chiefly received? Hence we read, "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them"—"The common people heard him gladly"—"Have any of the rulers believed on him?"—"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Not that the rich and great are excluded. And there always have been a few who

have humbled themselves, to be exalted. But "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

— We have much reason to conclude, that these shepherds were among the number of those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. While many of their countrymen, in ceiled houses, were seeking their consolation in the world, they, like Simeon, were waiting for the Consolation of Israel. Perhaps at this very moment they were silently musing: or perhaps conversing with each other (for they were obviously together), "when the kingdom of God should come;" and sighing out the words of David, "O that the Salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad"—When, "lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them! and the glory of the Lord shone round about them!"

And this angel, by his example, teaches us, however much we may be placed above them, not to overlook the poor, nor refuse to visit them—especially God's poor; for they are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him. It is a character of the citizen of Zion, that in his eyes a vile person is contemned, however high: but he honours them that fear the Lord, though they may not have the gold ring, and the gay clothing.

The Sacred Historian has not failed to tell us how these men were engaged at the time of their being thus distinguished. They were in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Thus they

were abiding in their calling, and faithfully and actively discharging the duties of it. Never mind how humble your occupations may be—

> "Honour, and shame, from no condition rise:
> "Act well your part—there all the honour lies."

Be attentive and diligent, and you are useful and respectable. *They* ought to blush, who do nothing, or have nothing to do. Their mode of living is as inconsistent with the life of a Christian required in the Gospel, as a life of vice. The tree that bringeth forth no *good* fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. The servant that hid his Lord's talent in a napkin, did not abuse it; but because he was an unprofitable servant, he was a wicked one, and therefore punished. The case of these shepherds is not a solitary one. Go through the Scriptures, and make out a list of all those whom God favoured and dignified with his visits; and shew me one among them all, that was a drone in the community, or not properly and usefully employed. *Other* beings are more likely to appear to the useless and idle. "Our idle days," says Bishop Hall, "are the Devil's busy ones."

> "For Satan finds some mischief still,
> "For idle hands to do."

It was well said by an old Puritan, "I find diligence the best preservative from temptation: for when Satan comes to me with his proposals, I say to him, I cannot attend to thee now—I am so busy."

"The labours of the righteous tendeth to life." "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

DEC. 27.—"*Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.*" Luke ii. 15.

THIS was the language of the Shepherds. And it was not a vain curiosity that led them. While

keeping their flocks by night, the angel of the Lord appeared to them; and said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." This they considered—as it really was, an order to repair thither, to ascertain and report the fact. And they would have set off instantly. But there suddenly descended a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men. We know not how long this melody continued. Yet who can wonder at their staying till it was over? But no sooner were the angels gone away into heaven, than "the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass." Let us accompany them; and contemplate a scene which will induce us to exclaim, with Moses, on a very marvellous, but very inferior occasion—"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?"

In this thing which is come to pass, we behold a very striking display of divine truth. The coming of the Messiah was called, "*The* truth of God." Many things evinced the divine veracity: but this was the main pledge. It was the chief promise ever given to man. It was also the earliest assurance; it was given as early as the Fall. And what a length of time the assurance seemed to hang in suspense: a year—a hundred years—a thousand years—another thousand, and another, rolled away before the seed of the woman appeared! Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Doth his promise fail for evermore? But

at the end of four thousand years, it was proclaimed. His councils of old are faithfulness and truth.—How many also were, what we may call the minute parts of the promise. It was foretold that he should descend from a particular nation—the nation of the Jews: a particular tribe—the tribe of Judah: a particular family—the family of David: a particular mother—a virgin.—On how many things does the veracity of God now depend, the failure of any one of which would prove him a liar. The place of his residence was foretold—it was Bethlehem. The prophecy had been recorded for ages, and was acknowledged at the time of his birth. But how many things were necessary to this; and how accidental seemed the fulfilment! For Joseph and Mary were residing at Nazareth. And had not Judea been under the Roman dominions; and had not Cæsar Augustus proudly wished to know the number and wealth of his subjects; and had Mary been delivered a few days sooner or later: he would have been born elsewhere, and the word of God would have been of none effect. All these occurrences appear casual, and they were so to the parties themselves; but not to God: he knows all his works from the beginning. All these events seemed loosely connected, but they were links, making an adamantine chain. The truth of God was the pivot on which all turned: the centre in which all united: the end to which all referred. Let us see here, not only how willing, but how able he is to accomplish his word; and be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Let no apparent delay, no opposing difficulties, no interfering interests, affect our minds. His purpose is secretly, yet uncontrolably, moving on; and the most unlikely instruments are contributing to its execution. How much depends on our confidence in the truth of God!

We see, in the thing which has come to pass, a wonderful combination. A combination of natures —I admit his humanity; and why should I question

his divinity? I find many things ascribed to him, which cannot belong to him as God; and I find others ascribed to him, which cannot pertain to him as man: and here is the solution of the difficulty—"God was manifest in the flesh." A combination of grandeur and abasement. Whose birth could have been more obscure and degrading? What welcome was given him? What preparation was made for him? "The world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." A poor young female was his mother; a stable his chamber, and a manger his cradle—because there was no room at the inn. But whose birth was ever so glorious? Ye gods of the earth, bring forth your first-born—but no new star sparkles over where the young child is. No wise men come miraculously from the East to worship him. No angel comes down. No heavenly choir sing his birth. No command is given, Yea, and let all the angels of God worship him. No spirit of prophecy breathes inspiration. No Simeon waits for him as the consolation of Israel. No Anna speaks of him to all those who look for redemption.

We also see a prodigy of benevolence. Every thing says, Behold a love that passeth knowledge. His former condition—he *was* rich and *became* poor. His independence and choice: he was not *constrained* to enter such a state—Lo! I *come*, says he: he *gave* his life a ransom for us. The principle that moved him—it was not our desert; but his own *mercy*. He came into the world to save *sinners:* he died for the ungodly: in his love and pity he redeemed us. His not waiting for our application, arising from a sense of our need of Him—His engaging, in foresight of all the degree and extent of his sufferings—His going through the whole, without repenting of the expensive undertaking—His accomplishing it with delight.

"Oh! for this love, let rocks and hills
"Their lasting silence break;
"And all harmonious human tongues
"The Saviour's praises speak!"

Here, also, we see an example for our imitation. Did he thus despise worldly distinctions? and shall we admire them? Shall we seek great things for ourselves? Such a Christian by the side of the manger! Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. Shall we find it difficult to condescend to men of low estate, and to exercise self-denial in doing good? "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Did he not only stoop so low, but suffer so much, for us; and shall we not be willing to endure any privations, and incur any sacrifices, for our brethren? "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour."

Great as this thing is which has come to pass, there are many who will refuse to take a step to see it. Even at the very festival, which is the commemoration of it, they will be found any where rather than at Bethlehem; and be attracted to every thing, rather than to that sight, which the shepherds left their flocks, and made haste to see; which the Eastern sages came such a vast distance to behold; and which drew all heaven down to earth. Some, while they observe the day by a freedom from labour, not only neglect, but insult the subject of it; and, by intemperance and riot, revive the works of the Devil, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy.

But let us call off our attention from the little, debasing, vexing, defiling things of the world, and

repair to the Infant of Bethlehem, the desire of all nations. Let us give him the glory which is due unto his holy Name; and say, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Let us behold in him provision made for our recovery, the most suitable to our wants, and adequate to our relief; and placed entirely within our reach. Let us embrace him; and exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him: we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

And let our zeal and gratitude be equal to our joy. And let us follow the shepherds not only in our going, but in our return—"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child"—"And they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

DEC. 28.—"*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.*" Luke i. 6.

THIS worthy couple are known as the father and mother of a very illustrious personage; of whom the Judge of all said, "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." But while Zacharias and Elisabeth derive distinction from their son, they are worthy of attention, personally considered. Though not distinguished by worldly grandeur, they were great in the sight of the Lord; and, though their names are not recorded in the annals of national history,

their characters will be had in everlasting remembrance in the Scriptures of truth. Five things are here said of their piety.

— It was sincere—They were righteous *before God.* Many are righteous before men, who only look on the outward appearance: but the Lord, who searcheth the heart, and sees actions in their motives, disowns them. A large assembly may be convened together, and be engaged in the same exercises; but they only worship Him, who worship him in Spirit and in truth. What are we in His estimation? He that judgeth us, is the Lord.

— It was practical—They *walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.* Divine truth is important; yet, if we know these things, happy are we only if we do them. Practice is nothing without principle: and what proof have we of the reality and excellency of principle, without practice? "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." We do not undervalue experience; but the Scripture requires something more than good feelings—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." A good conscience will always be accompanied with a good conversation. He is a vain man, who says he has faith, and hath not works—Can such faith save him?

— It was impartial—They walked in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. None are universally wicked. Vices are often inconsistent with each other—prodigality opposes avarice, and covetousness complains of extravagance. All do something—for conscience must be appeased; but they are determined in their *selections,* by the easiness of the thing, or its relation to some one of their interests—They have no regard to the will of God—for if their observance sprang from a regard to his pleasure, this would lead them to avoid every thing

which he has forbidden, and to inquire after every thing he has enjoined. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways."

— It was irreproachable—They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, *blameless*. It is not said, they were sinless. The subjects of Divine grace will always have enough to bewail before God, instead of saying, I have attained, I am already perfect. But it is a mercy (and this is possible) to be preserved from those falls which injure our reputation and influence; and also from those imprudences which draw upon a man the reproach of folly or weakness, when he is not taxable with sin; and from those veerings of opinion, which are yet consistent with some degree of fixed principle in higher things. It is well when our good cannot be evil spoken of; and we are without offence till the day of Christ.

— It was mutual—They were *both* righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. This is not the case in every family. In some houses, there is no fear of God in either master or mistress, father or mother, husband or wife. In others, there is one of these relations godly—and only one. They are joined together by marriage, but not in the Lord. This difference may be accounted for three ways. One of the parties may have been called after their affinity—neither of them knowing God at the time of contracting it. Or one of the parties may have deceived the other—and some are guarded and crafty—and those who are upright themselves, are generally free from suspicion. Or the religious individual was perhaps (how strange!) careless upon this subject; and did not feel religion, in his choice, the one thing needful; or was bribed, against his conviction, by other things. The two former cases deserve pity;

but this, censure—and his error will correct him. For nothing can be more desirable and important than the godlinesss of *both* parties. How near is the relation! How constant and influential the intercourse! How lamentable, in a course where we need every assistance, to meet with impediments! How can two walk together, except they be agreed? —And are there servants? are there children? Each will have their adherents. And it is not difficult to conclude, from the depravity of human nature, which will be more readily followed—the one who would lead into the world, or the one who would lead out of it.

But the case would be more awful still, if one of the parties was an official character—Surely, a Zacharias should have an Elisabeth. What disgrace and injury may result from the union of a preacher with an irreligious or indiscreet companion! The Apostle therefore describes the character of a minister's wife, as well as of his own: and naturally concludes, that he who proclaims his want of piety and judgment in a case so plain and momentous, *tells* how unqualified he is for other matters—"For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

DEC. 29.—"*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him.*" Job xiii. 15.

THIS is a noble resolution.—It supposes suffering. Slaying, here, stands for every loss and infliction he could suffer or forebode. Slaying, literally means death: and Job does not exclude this from his supposition. He more than once seems to apprehend it as the consequence of his present malady—I know

thou wilt bring me to death—My breath is corrupt; my days are extinct—The graves are ready for me. Indeed there is not much for him to slay—He has slain my cattle, my servants, my children; he has slain the tenderness of my wife, and the confidence of my friends; he has slain my health—and if there be any thing more, let him slay it—I can trust him down to the grave, and through it—for I know that my Redeemer liveth—and that in my flesh I shall see God—though my reins be consumed within me.

—It professes confidence—"Though he slay me, yet will I *trust in him.*" It is obvious, from hence, that he did not think God was really his enemy. If he had, how could he have trusted in him? He knew nothing of the language of a mystic—"Though I perish, I shall serve thee still—If thou send me to hell, I shall love thee there." These are the sayings of religious madness—and one hour of the suffering they make so light of, would bring them to the use of their senses. By the very law of my nature, it is impossible for me to regard a Being that I believe determined to make me miserable for ever: and God himself has commanded me to seek after my salvation and happiness—I could not therefore acquiesce in my misery, without violating his will. Such a state of sublime self-annihilation, therefore, is not possible, if it were proper; and it is not proper, if it were possible. But it is both proper and possible to believe, that natural evil may be converted into moral good; that bodily pain may conduce to spiritual profit; that though no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous, it may afterward yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised therewith; that behind a frowning providence, he may hide a smiling face; that though he amputates a limb, it is to save life; and that, in ways beyond all my conceptions, he can, he will make all things work together for good to them that love him. And this is what Job means by his confidence.

— But it also intimates difficulty—*Though* he slay me, *yet* will I trust in him. For there is much in searching and awful dispensations to try and check confidence: much to awaken suspicion and fear. When things are agreeable and prosperous, we feel comparatively but little difficulty. But when the scene is changed; and the sky overspread; and the clouds return after the rain; when we are stripped, bereaved, abandoned—then we are cast out of sight; our way is perished from the Lord; and we think our eye will no more see good! When troubles befall others, we go to them, and strengthen their hands in God. We readily deal out the promises to them, and feel inclined to reprove, if they refuse to be comforted. We tell them, God is only waiting to be gracious; and will appear to their joy. But when we come into the same condition ourselves, we are unable to follow the advice we have given, and to receive the encouragements we have administered. Thus we incur the censure—"Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands; thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees: but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled." Let us not be too severe with people in affliction. To trust God, when we know not what he is doing; when he seems to oppose us, and his word too; when he presents a sword even to our bosom, and we feel its point—it is then, verily, no easy thing to hope in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. But Job did this—Yea, says he, in the midst of every killing providence—though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Let us therefore seek after this confidence in God. For, first, there is nothing so honourable to God. Secondly; there is nothing so beneficial to ourselves. Thirdly; there is nothing so reasonable in itself—for, whatever view we take of God; whether we consider his perfections;

or his relations; or his promises; or his past dealings with others and ourselves: the more we shall be induced to say, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." So true is it—They that *know* his Name, will put their trust in him.

Dec. 30.—"*Are not my days few?*" Job. x. 20.

— Not years: months: weeks: but days—Life is to be reckoned by *days*.—Are not my days *few?* They are so in every respect—relatively; comparatively; absolutely. It will not be necessary to prove this; as no one denies it—or can deny it. Yet how much depends upon the proper use of a truth so obvious, and a reflection so simple! Are not my days few?

— But how came they so? All men die, but not willingly. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life: but he cannot continue it. He hates, he dreads death—It is the king of terrors. The thought of it embitters his comforts, and keeps him always subject to bondage. And could this have been the natural state of man as he came from the hands of his Maker? The Deist meets with this fact, as well as we: and as he cannot deny it, let him account for it under the empire and agency of a Being who is "omnipotent benevolence." Revelation gives us the only rational and convincing account—"The body is dead because of sin." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned." It is not "a debt due to nature." It is the consequence of a judicial and penal infliction: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath." We are not struck with this, because

we are accustomed to the result; and it gradually takes place. But could we have seen the Deluge destroying the whole world at once, we should not have questioned the provocation of God by some mighty cause. But where is the difference, as to punitive justice, whether all the criminals are executed together, or led forth one by one? Are not my days few?

— Do not then render them fewer. What! you are ready to exclaim, do you think we are going to turn self-murderers? Yet how many are continually reported as having destroyed themselves! But violence is not the only mode of shortening life. One of our most eminent physicians has affirmed, that "the board destroys more than the sword." Another has said, "Though all men are mortal, not one in a thousand dies a purely natural death." Many enervate themselves by lying late in bed; and living (if it deserves the name of life) in lazy inactiveness, as injurious to health as to virtue. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. Fretfulness and anxiety corrode. Anger and malice consume. It is needless to mention intemperance and sensuality, the effects of which so often lie down with the sinner in an early grave. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is. By freeing us from the malignant passions—which are always injurious to ourselves, as well as to others: and by inducing the affectionate and benevolent ones, which are always beneficial: by the peace it sheds abroad in the bosom; and the hope and confidence it authorizes and inspires, as well as by surrounding us with the care of Providence; it is, as David calls it, "The health of the countenance;" and justifies the admonition of his son—"Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." Are not my days few?

— Why then moderate your attachment to every thing that depends upon their brevity. Who would

set their heart on that which is not? Who would load with treasure, a vessel, rotten or full of holes? All the admired distinctions and possessions of the world are very uncertain in themselves, and often leave us—But if they continue with us, we cannot continue with them. We brought nothing with us into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out—Yet, stripped and naked as we shall go—go we must—and the time of our departure is at hand. Oh! what shall we think a few "days" hence, of those pursuits which now so much engross us! "To-morrow we die;" and what will it signify, whether we are carried to the grave from a cottage, or a mansion; or leave behind us much or little? Endeavour to think always, as you will feel soon. "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth way." Are not my days few?

— Then let us well employ and improve them. This is what Moses prayed for: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." And what is wisdom? This must be determined by circumstances. What is wise conduct in one man, may be folly in another, because of their different relations and circumstances. But it is easy to determine what is wisdom in a man who numbers his days, and finds them to be few: and who has, during their continuance, an all-important interest to secure: and has no other opportunity. If he is guilty, it must be wise in him to seek forgiveness. If he is lost, it must be wise in him to seek salvation; and if he be unable to save himself, it must be wise in him to apply to another, who is appointed for the very purpose. And in our case, such an one there is. His Name is Jesus. He

is mighty to save. He is willing to save. Instead of complaining of your application, he only complains of your neglect—Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. Many have tried his power and his love; and recommended him from their own happy experience. He is now on the Throne of Grace. But he will not be always there. He will soon ascend the tribunal of justice. Oh! seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Behold, *now* is the accepted time. Behold, *now* is the day of salvation.

This part of our subject branches itself into another line of duty. As you are to *gain* good, so you are to *do* good—And this, too, is equally enforced by the fewness of your days. Life is yours; and it affords you one privilege above the saints in light. It is the opportunity of beneficence—of relieving the poor, of instructing the ignorant, of converting the sinner. But remember two things. *Their* days are few; and therefore they will soon be gone beyond the possibility of receiving relief. And *your* days are few; and you will soon be placed beyond the possibility of affording it. Wing your zeal, therefore, with the thought—"The night cometh wherein no man can work."

— There is a way of lengthening life. It is—not by duration, but by diligence. It is by "filling our days." It is by doing much business in a little time. Some live longer in a week, than others do in a year.

DEC. 31.—"*He thanked God, and took courage.*" Acts xxviii. 15.

GRATITUDE and confidence are individually excellent; but their union is admirable. They adorn, and recommend, and aid, each other. There is no one

follow the example of Pa
brethren at Appii Forum—Le
take courage.

What can be more reasonal
when we review the past? W
cut off—and not a few in their
carried through another year
been exposed to accidents an
they who are now in the dust
been as delicate, as frail as the
living; the living, to praise Hi
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wardrobe. We have had, not
but the comforts and the indulge
given us richly all things to e
the outgoings of our mornin
rejoice

How has he preserved and blessed our country, notwithstanding all our national provocations! He has not only blessed us personally, but relatively—He has been the benefactor of our families, and our friends. Yea, he has blessed us, not only in the kindnesses of his providence, but in the means of grace—We have had our Sabbaths. Our eyes have seen our teachers. We have been made joyful in his house of prayer. He has fed us with the finest of the wheat, and with oil out of the rock has he satisfied us. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!

— We have had trials—but even these, instead of checking gratitude, if properly reviewed, will increase it. They have been few, compared with our comforts. They have been light, compared with the sufferings of others. They have been variously alleviated—In measure, when they shot forth, he debated with them: he stayed his rough wind in the day of the east wind. They have all been founded in a regard to our welfare. They have embittered sin; and endeared the Scriptures, and the Throne of Grace, and the sympathy of Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. They have weaned us from the world—They have told us that this is not our rest—They have also told us that he knows how to support and to deliver. Aaron's rod blossomed—so shall ours; and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. There was honey at the end of Jonathan's rod—and there is sweetness at the end of ours—Yea, already we can say, It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Surely a gratitude is required, on this occasion, that will not expire in mere acknowledgments; but induce me to dedicate myself to his service, and walk before him in newness of life.

And what can be more reasonable than to take courage when we look forward? We enter, indeed, on the year commencing, not knowing what a day may bring forth: and darkness is apt to gender

dread. Duties *will* arise; and we must meet their claims. Afflictions *may* arise—indeed they are almost unavoidable. Does not every path of life lead through a vale of tears? Is not every thing here uncertain? My health may be assailed—My friends may be removed—This year I may die.

— But I will pore on this no longer—I will not sour my present mercies, by suspicion, or fear, or anxiety. It is my duty, it is my privilege, to be careful for nothing; but to cast all my care on Him who careth for me.—I take courage, from his former dispensations. Has he ever forsaken or forgotten me? Because he has been my help, therefore under the shadow of his wings will I rejoice.—I take courage, from his providence. I am not in "a fatherless world." Nothing is left to chance. My ways are continually before Him; and the very hairs of my head are all numbered.—I take courage, from his power. Nothing is too hard for Him. He can make even mine enemies to be at peace with me. He can render every loss a gain. He can make all things work together for my good.—I take courage, from his promises. They are all faithfulness and truth. And what case do they leave unnoticed, unprovided for, from which despondency can spring? I will therefore trust, and not be afraid—but go forward, cheerfully—with Him who has said—I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

"Beneath his smiles my heart has liv'd,
"And part of heaven possess'd:
"I praise his Name for grace receiv'd,
"And trust him for the rest."

FINIS.

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